

Re-considering the limits and conditions of possibility of Foucault's understanding of the subject

by

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Abstract

This dissertation uses Foucault's archaeological text *The Order of Things* (2002) to explicate two propositions. First, Foucault questioned the limits and conditions of possibilities for knowledge about our existence. Second, Foucault presupposed a subject whose capacity to know is constitutive of these limits and conditions of possibility. Evidencing these propositions I will explicate how, through his critique of these possibilities for knowledge, Foucault presupposes a self-constituting subject.

This will be undertaken by developing but also modifying the possibilities for understanding Foucault's work delineated by Amy Allen's articles, *The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and The Death of the Subject* (2000) and *Foucault and Enlightenment: A Critical Reappraisal* (2003). This will show, first, that it is necessary to contrast Allen's focus on Foucault's critique of transcendentalism by including his critique of positivism. Second, the relation between Foucault's presuppositions about the way in which we constitute the limits and conditions of possibility for modern knowledge. Last, the way in which the perquisite of effective theory limits the meaning of Foucault's.

Dedication

To my ever patient mother, friends, and family of choice

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation uses Foucault's archaeological text *The Order of Things* (2002) to explicate two central propositions. First, Foucault questioned the limits and conditions of possibilities for knowledge about our existence. Second, he presupposed a subject whose capacity to know is constitutive of these limits and conditions of possibility. Evidencing these propositions, I will explicate how Foucault presupposes a viable understanding of a self-constituting subject. Undertaking this, I contribute to defences of Foucault's understanding of the subject, and, to a lesser extent, to commentary surrounding whether there is consistency or concession in Foucault's later work.

The relevance of this contribution, and the impetus for my argument, arose from Amy Allen's articles, 'The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and The Death of the Subject' (Allen, 2000) and 'Foucault and Enlightenment: A Critical Reappraisal' (Allen, 2003).¹ In these articles, Allen evidences how Foucault's account of the subject can be defended and the importance of this defence arises from two aspects of her argument. First, unlike many defences of Foucault's account of the subject Allen includes Foucault's archaeological texts in her defence. This is important because whilst the publication, in English, of his later work has led to a re-consideration of his archaeological and genealogical studies emphasis is given to the latter, with his archaeological approach

¹ Allen (2003) uses her own translation of Foucault's Dissertation (*Paris*, The Centre Michel Foucault, *Introduction à L'anthropologie de Kant*, thèse complémentaire).

regarded as a structuralist / post-structuralist phase Foucault moved beyond (see, for example, Rajchman (1985), Moss (1998)). It is perhaps because of this that there is a relative dearth of material focusing on *The Order of Things* (2002).¹ Allen, however, evidences her argument with reference to the relation between this text and one of Foucault's first texts, his Doctoral Dissertation, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology* (2008).² By using these texts, she makes an important contribution to those who defend Foucault's account of the subject by reading consistency between the presuppositions in his earlier archaeologies and genealogies, and those in his later examination of the self-constituting subject (Cref. Foucault, 1990), (see, for example, Han, 2002; Sharpe, 2005; McNay, 1994; Patton, 1995, 1998; Mchoul & Grace, 1995; Gordon, 1995; Racevskis, 1994, Fillion, 2005).

Yet from the relatively few defences of Foucault's subject available in English I also selected Allen's (2000, 2003) because in the space of two articles she evidences the problem faced when defending Foucault from criticism. The problem, and the second reason for the focus on this particular reading of Foucault's work, is her incorporation of Foucault's project into the prevailing limits and conditions for our knowledge of our subjectivity.

¹ It is because of this relative dearth of material published in English that I primarily use articles, as opposed to texts, when considering OT and the dismissal of Foucault's archaeologies.

² Whilst it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to focus on Foucault's Dissertation in a sustained manner, Allen's (2003) article is crucial because it offers a crucial insight into the possibilities for our understanding of Foucault's work when we consider this text in relation to his oeuvre. These are made even more insightful because it is a text that has only recently been made widely available in English. Other English publications that also recognise the contribution made to our understanding of his work when we use this text include Han, B (2003) cited here, and Bove, A, whose own interpretation and commentary on this text are available online at <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpfoucault.htm> [accessed Nov. 2008].

The nature and effect of this incorporation is highlighted by Paul Bové (1994), who uses the reception of Foucault's archaeologies in the humanities as evidence for the way in which the exclusions from and the inclusions made to knowledge can reinforce the disciplinary nature of humanist education. These are made in order to assimilate knowledge into the humanist disciplines and the accepted order of power therein. In regards to Foucault's work, this can occur when the inclusions and exclusions obscure his theorisation of the relation between reason and power (Bove, 1994).¹ Whilst the particulars of this theorization are beyond the scope of this dissertation, this argument highlights the relevance of the way in which Foucault's work is interpreted for our understanding of his work.

In regards to Allen's (2003) interpretation, it highlighted how her aim of overcoming the criticisms of Foucault's work made by Habermas (Cref. Allen, 2003) limited this interpretation. The limitation arose from Allen's highlighting the similarities between Foucault's and Habermas' projects, in particular, her arguing that the way in which they are both neo-Kantian. Whilst this evidenced that characterising Foucault as anti-modern, anti-humanist, and anti-Enlightenment and Habermas as in favour of each of these traditions of thought is detrimental to our understanding of Foucault's work, it also undermined the relevance of Foucault's differentiation from these traditions (see, in particular, in Ashenden & Owen, 1999; Flynn (1989)). For my purposes, the relevance of this differentiation

concerns Allen's inclusion of Foucault's critique of Kant's transcendental subject but exclusion of Foucault's own conception of the subject.

However, given the preponderance of material delineating the similarities and differences between Foucault and Habermas' understanding of the subject, and the numerous defences of Foucault from his criticisms, this dissertation will draw on, rather than add to, this material (see, in particular, Ashenden & Owen, 1999; Kelly, 1994). The aim in using this material is to demonstrate why my point of departure from Allen's (2000, 2003) argument is her exclusion of Foucault's alternative understanding of the subject.

In regards to this, I will use Allen's argument and corresponding interpretation of Foucault's *The Order of Things* (2002) as an antithesis. That is, Allen will be a point of contrast for my argument and interpretation, the contrast arising from my evidencing the relevance of including Foucault's refusal to forward a normative account of the subject (see, for example, Patton, 1995, 1998; Rajchman, 1997; Butler, 2002; Hacking, 1994, 1995).¹

¹Amy Allen has recently published a third article 'Discourse, Power, and Subjectification: The Foucault/Habermas Debate Reconsidered', pp. 1-28 in *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 40, No. 1, (Spring 2009). However, due to its publication after my dissertation had begun to be written a third article published by Amy Allen (2009, cited here) has not been included in my argument. An initial reading, however, validates the argument I make against Allen's first two articles because she retains, albeit in a more critical way, her aim of reconciling Foucault and Habermas. It is this aim that, as this dissertation will show, limits the ability of her interpretation to defend Foucault's work. Two additions to her argument are, however, of note. Allen reaches the conclusion that Foucault's work raises the issue of the relation between validity and power, and the nature of normativity, in the constitution of our subjectivity. This confirms the argument made in this dissertation; that to use her understanding of Foucault's work it is necessary to include three features of his work. First, his critique of empiricism (Section 1 and 3, below), second, his construal of epistemology (Section 2, below) and last, the way in which he adopts an approach that challenges the logic and conventions consequent of empiricism and the privileging of epistemology (Section 3, below). It is also of note that in this last article Allen suggests that a Foucaultian understanding of subjectivity will benefit from considering the difference between power and domination in Foucault's work. It is of note because this differentiation is part of my argument for the way in which Foucault presupposes self-constitution; see Section 2 below.

I will begin to demonstrate my contrast to Allen (2000, 2003) in the first section where, contra Allen, I include Foucault's critique of the human sciences. The aim is to evidence Foucault's critique of the positivistic limits and conditions of possibility for modern intelligibility and propose that, for Foucault, the positivistic limits and conditions of possible for subjectivity are the limits and conditions of possibility of modern subjectivity.

In the second section, I develop Allen's (2000) suggestion that Foucault's presupposes a self-constituting self. This will expand the suggestions made by Allen to evidence that Foucault's presuppositions are concomitant with his presuppositions about the way in which we constitute the limits and conditions of possibility for modern knowledge. This will show that Foucault has a particular conception of self-constitution, one that premises his depiction of modern thought. Undertaking this, I assume that in *The Order of Things* (2002) [hereafter referred to as OT] the nature of knowledge rather than language is central.

Central to this explication is my elaboration of Paul Patton's (1998) defence of Foucault's account of the subject from the criticism that he lacks an account of a self-constituting subject. This defence not only provides an argument for the way in which Foucault presupposes the subject as self-constituting, but also highlights the importance of the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity when approaching Foucault's work. As such, in the second section I develop Patton's argument with reference to Foucault's earlier

understanding of the subject's relation to knowledge in OT.¹ In this manner, Allen's (2000, 2003) articles will facilitate my explication of the way in which Foucault's understanding of the subject corresponds with his critique of the epistemological premise of modern intelligibility.

Developing the first two sections, in the last section I evidence the way in which power is immanent with the activity through which we constitute knowledge and how our capacity to know the world can be identified and finalized. Undertaking this I show that Foucault's portrayal of the way in which we actively take up the thinking of the episteme is crucial to the viability of his work. Viable refers to the effectiveness of Foucault's project and, as I make evident, this arises when we include his critique of the positivistic limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity.

By way of a conclusion, I briefly show the problematic nature of including Foucault's critique, but also show that my interpretation is one of the two predominate options for viably understanding Foucault's work.

¹ This development is recommended by Patton (1995), who highlights that whilst it is beyond the scope of his article it is possible to validate his argument through a consideration of Foucault's epistemology.

SECTION 1

BRACKETING THE LIMITS AND CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY

This section will critically consider Allen's (2000, 2003) defence of Foucault's account of the subject, in particular, her suggestions regarding Foucault's examination of the subject. The aim is to develop Allen's (ibid) argument beyond her assumption that Foucault's revealing of the conditions of possibility of subjectivity is restricted to a critique of Immanuel Kant's transcendental thought.

Undertaking this, I consider Allen's (2000, 2003) usage of the notion of Foucault's bracketing, highlighting both the relevance of and limitations to her understanding of this notion. This will show that the central limitation is her exclusion of his critique of the human sciences, which enables her to approach Foucault as writing in accordance with the empirical standards constituting valid knowledge in modern Anglo-American traditions of thought.

To overcome this limitation, I evidence how Foucault's conception of the limits and conditions of subjectivity in OT involves his critique of the empirical, positivistic, limits and conditions of possibility of subjectivity. Part of this evidence is provided by introducing Han's (2002) interpretation of Foucault's Dissertation and OT, which, by emphasizing Foucault's critique of the transcendental nature of positivism, is a contrast to Allen's interpretation.

1.1 POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS

Allen (2000) argues Foucault bracketed rather than eliminated the constituting subject in his earlier work and did so to move the subject from a thing to be explained to a thing that explains. This argument is developed in her subsequent article, in which she elaborates how Foucault's concern with Kant in his earlier work is an examination of the conditions of possibility of our subjectivity that arises from his awareness that these conditions are constituted by our subjective experience (2003). There are two suggestions arising from this article that are of particular importance for this defence: first, Foucault presupposes, throughout his work a subject that is self-constituted, rather than constituted, and second, Foucault's subject constitutes itself as subject by taking up the thinking of the episteme (Allen, 2000).¹ That is, through the relation the subject has with knowledge.

Both suggestions are important because they enable Allen (2000) to defend Foucault from the criticism that he assumed a wholly determined subject, a criticism relating to the, apparent, lack of an account of an individual agent capable of reflective self-understanding in Foucault's work (Cref. Allen 2000, 2003; see also, Dews 1995, 1995a; Taylor, 1995, 1995a).² Thus, in contrast to criticisms, Allen argues Foucault aimed not to eliminate the subject as an agent, but to bracket the modern notion of the subject in order to study the historical constitution of the notion itself. In doing this, Foucault created the possibility of

¹ In this dissertation, episteme is understood as the total body of knowledge within a particular cultural context. This is, broadly, in accordance with Foucault's usage of the notion in OT, in that it implies there is an ordering of or a privilege given to different knowledges within this total body. I use the term in a broad sense because Foucault changed his conceptualisation of the total body of knowledge as his work progressed, thus, episteme became the 'archive' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002a); the text published subsequent to OT (Sheridan, 1980).

² This is elaborated in Section 3.2 below, which will show how we can defend against these criticisms by including Foucault's critique of positivism and his presuppositions about the subject.

re-conceiving this notion, a possibility he developed by later considering a self-constituting self (Cref. Allen, 2000, 2001; see also, Han, 2002; Sharpe, 2005; McNay, 1994; Patton, 1995, 1998; Mchoul & Grace, 1995; Fillion, 2005).

Allen (2000), however, limits the ability of her argument to counter such criticisms because her own interpretation of Foucault's work reinstates the criticisms she delineated in her earlier article. First, she precludes defending Foucault from the criticism that he lacks an adequate account of an agent capable of reflective self-understanding (Allen 2000).¹ Second and related to this, she fails to offer a viable account of how Foucault examines rather than ignores our capacity for reflective self-understanding.² Both limitations arise because she excludes the possibility that Foucault's work contains an alternative account of the subject. Hence, for Allen, the extent to which Foucault makes it possible to transform ourselves is limited to his providing theoretical and conceptual resources for, rather than an account of, the relation between structure and agency (2000, pp.128).

This assumption and its limiting effects are apparent in her stipulation that she uses the notion of bracketing advisedly (2000, pp.121). Whilst the modification this stipulation makes to the notion of Foucault's bracketing is not specifically stated in her article, when we consider her use of the notion it becomes apparent that it refers to her limiting Foucault's bracketing to the a priori subject; that is, Allen argues Foucault brackets the transcendental categories through which the modern subject is understood.

¹ Section 2 below will evidence how Foucault construes an agent capable of reflective self-understanding through this portrayal of the conditions of possibility for subjectivity.

² This is shown in section 3, where the relation between the viability of Foucault's work and his presuppositions about self-understanding is explicated.

LIMITING POSSIBILITIES

The notion of Foucault's bracketing is taken from Dreyfus and Rainbow's *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1982) where it is used to describe Foucault's archaeology as a pragmatic response to prevailing knowledge about our existence. Using this notion, Dreyfus and Rainbow evidence how Foucault's archaeologies sought to go beyond phenomenology – both transcendental and existential – and the structuralist reaction to these (ibid). In a similar manner, Allen (2003) characterises Foucault as undertaking a '[...] critique of critique [...]' (2003, pp.189) in which Foucault criticises Kant's project for closing the openings of thought he created and undertakes a critique in the Kantian sense of the term, interrogating the limits and conditions of possibility from which Kant began, the transcendental subject (ibid). Suggesting this, Allen, rightly, continues Dreyfus and Rainbow's argument, that Foucault's critique is of philosophy since Kant in which the subject has replaced the object as the locus of meaning.

In summary, Kant's transcendentalism consists of there being two selves (a double self), the phenomenal and the nominal, with the nominal self-ascertained through the historical progress of ideas. We can ascertain the self in this manner because, for Kant, the concepts we know are known independently of the phenomenal realm of experience. Hence, the appearance of the thing (for itself) is separable from the substance of the thing (in itself) and can be known with reference to the noumenal – non-epistemic - realm of possibilities, rather than the realm of experience (Buckle, 2004; Han, 2002). For Kant, it is the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge within this realm, ascertained through a history of

ideas, which constitute our understanding of our experiences in the phenomenal realm. As such, the ideas, categories, concepts through which we know ourselves constitute our self-understanding. In this manner, our knowledge of ourselves is the limit and condition of the possibilities for our understanding of our subjective experiences.

Through this formulation of self-knowledge, Kant gave impetus to dialectical arguments in which it is assumed that through an examination of the history of our ideas we can discern the meaning that is consistently apparent in these ideas and therefore necessary to our experiential self. This meaning is considered necessary because a correlation is assumed between the meanings attributed to things and our understanding of these things (objects). For example, we know ourselves as free because of our experience of freedom; this experience is manifest in the ideas used to express freedom. Therefore, 'liberty' is an idea, concept, or category through which we understand our freedom. As such, the limits and conditions of freedom are known through our undertaking a history of an idea, such as liberty, which is used to express freedom. Thus, the limits and conditions of the meaning of such ideas are seen to manifest the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjective experience of freedom. In this vein, the limits and conditions of possibility for the idea of freedom manifest the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjective experience of freedom. They do so, however, on the assumption that our experience of things conforms to our concept of them and that we have an innate, fundamental or essential nature, the limits and conditions of which limit and condition the way in which we can know ourselves (Buckle, 2004).

In this manner, we can include the nature of subjectivity as an idea, making our construal of subjectivity itself integral to the conditions and limits of our subjectivity. Including this, the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity (as an idea, concept, and category) are the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjective experiences. The implication is that the meaning of what we know of ourselves is constitutive of our subjective experience. For example, the meaning of what we know of ourselves as mad is constitutive of our being a madman [sic].

Given this, when Allen (2001) argues that Foucault brackets the a priori subject to shift the subject from a thing that explains to a thing that needs to be explained, she highlights Foucault's bracketing of the assumption that ideas manifest our subjectivity. By bracketing this, Foucault evidences that the ideas, concepts, or categories through which our subjectivity is known are historically and contextually contingent rather than a representation of our essential or foundational subjectivity. Hence, for Allen, Foucault interrogates the conditions of possibility of the self-referential subject's existence in order to show the historical and cultural specificity of the transcendental conception of subjectivity (Allen, 2001, pp.190). Thus, Allen argues Foucault offers an account of the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity because he is aware that these limits and conditions of possibility are themselves a limit and condition of possibility of our subjective experience (2003, pp.192).

However, whilst Allen (2000,2003) evidences Foucault's critique of the transcendental conception of subjectivity there is a crucial difference between her usage of the notion of bracketing and Dreyfus and Rainbow's (1982) use. The difference between these two usages of the notion is that, contra Allen, Dreyfus and Rainbow's include Foucault's aim of going beyond human sciences. The difference this makes to Allen's interpretation of Foucault's work is evident in her construal of Foucault's description of his project in terms of the theme of the subject.

By referring to this theme and Foucault's bracketing the subject Allen incorporates into her interpretation his undertaking '[...] a history of the differing modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject.' (Foucault, 2000, pp.327) Thus, she contends that Foucault's archaeologies and genealogies offer a '[...]quasi-transcendental[...]' (2000, pp.115) account of the conditions without which there would not be subjects as we currently conceive of them; the 'quasi' denoting Foucault's preconceptions about the historical and social conditions constituting our subjectivity (2000, pp.124). Arguing this Allen overcomes the potential paradox in Foucault's claim that he is concerned with the subject, not power or discourse, even though his earlier work is devoid of reference to this subject. She does so because she highlights that the aim of Foucault's portrayal of a constituted subject is to reveal what is constitutive of our subjectivity and, by revealing this, evidence the contingent nature of the concepts we use to describe our subjectivity and our potential to alter our idea of ourselves (Allen, 2000, pp.124). Thus, for Allen, Foucault in his archaeologies and genealogies '[...] attempts to specify the social, cultural, and historical conditions of possibility of modern subjectivity.' (pp.125)

Yet, this portrayal is problematic because unlike Dreyfus and Rainbow (1982) when Allen (Allen, 2000, 2003) uses the notion of Foucault's bracketing she excludes Foucault's inclusion of the human sciences as a mode by which we are transformed into subjects; that is, his inclusion of '[...] the modes of inquiry that try to give themselves the status of sciences.' (Foucault, 2000, pp.327) This exclusion is crucial because when we include it we attach a proviso to our adherence to Allen's argument. The proviso is that Foucault's critique of the limits and conditions of possibilities for subjectivity extends beyond his providing empirical insights and we attach it because we can argue that he critiqued a mode of inquiry that he considered to be a historical and social condition constituting of our subjectivity.

1.2 RE-INSTATING POSSIBILITIES – FOUCAULT'S CRITIQUE OF POSITIVISM

Allen's (2000, 2003) exclusion of Foucault's positing that the human sciences are a mode by which we are transformed into subjects is evident in her later article, when she posits that Foucault undertakes his archaeologies and genealogies using an empirical approach that is restricted to the influence of Kant on the Modern episteme. This exclusion explains why to support her argument Allen (2003) uses Foucault's Dissertation and OT to evidence that Foucault's critique of Kant's turn to transcendentalism is combined with his recognition of Kant's inauguration of the modern episteme. Hence, when Allen (2003) refers to Foucault's archaeologies, she does so in order to argue that OT is a continuation of

his envisioning in his Dissertation a history of philosophy that exposes the problematic confusion between the empirical and transcendental in contemporary philosophy. This becomes, for Allen (2003), a critique of Continental philosophy, a tradition of thought in which the transcendental subject is predominant.

However, by limiting Foucault's critique to this tradition Allen interprets Foucault in accordance with a particular epistemological and methodological tradition. In this instance, it is the tradition of Analytic philosophy that prevails in the Western Anglo-American world. This tradition is one in which philosophic reasoning is conditioned by a rational, empirical standard by which to reason to about our existence (Buckle, 2004). Thus, modern knowledge is, for Allen, constituted by particular epistemological and methodological standards for inquiry. This assumption is pivotal to her interpretation of Foucault's portrayal of the modern episteme because Allen assumes Foucault's work is limited and conditioned by standards that will ensure the knowledge we forward is intelligible to us. Thus, for Allen there is a way of reasoning that is intelligible because it is part of the conditions of possibility for being a thinking subject and, according to Allen,

We cannot simply reject these conditions without at the same time surrendering our ability to be intelligible. (Allen, 2003, pp.188)

Yet by suggesting there are conditions of possibility for thought that we are unable to give up Allen's defence of Foucault's work is in contrast to the wealth of material demonstrating Foucault's challenge to the prevailing traditions of thought and the standards for inquiry

therein. This challenge is evident in the reception of Foucault's archaeologies. Recalling these debates the predominant issues concerned the implications of Foucault's histories and methodologies for a particular Anglo-American discipline or critical tradition.¹ In this manner, those accepting the implications his work had for a particular discipline or tradition defended his challenge to the prevailing epistemological assumptions and associated methods of inquiry within their respective disciplines.

In regards to Allen's (2003) interpretation of Foucault's earlier work, this is a particularly important recollection because these defences include Foucault's critique of modern intelligibility and his critique of modes of inquiry that are constitutive of our subjectivity. In contrast, Allen's defence of Foucault's work involves her argument that Foucault is aware he cannot reject modern, Kantian, intelligibility because he is limited by the aporias and paradoxes of modern thought (ibid, pp.190). To evidence this, Allen uses Foucault's portrayal of the historical a priori as something that sets the limits of the conditions of possibility for being a thinking subject. Thus, for Allen, Foucault's articulation of the historical a priori in OT is a critique of Kant's use of the term a priori when it is tied to non-empirical reflection on the limits and conditions of possibility for experience (Allen, 2003, pp.192).

This interpretation, however, relies on the exclusion of Foucault's critiquing both transcendental philosophy and the existence of a rational, empirical standard by which to

¹ A vital source of material surrounding Foucault's work is Barry Smart's (1994, 1995) seven-volume collection of Foucault's work, *Foucault: Critical Assessment*, vol. 1-7, Routledge: London; New York. The selection of material from a wide variety of sources and periods enables us to discern the central issues within the debates surrounding Foucault's work.

reason to about our existence. This critique is evident to Han (1998) who, like Allen, reads Foucault's OT as a continuation of his Dissertation and his concern, in this text, with the way in which the object of Kant's Anthropology becomes the subject of his Critique. That is, the way in which man's experiences, which are studied in Kant's Anthropology, are assumed as given attributes of man's nature in his Critique. Contra Allen, however, Han concludes that in OT Foucault begins from the premise that empirical knowledge rests on the establishment of specific hierarchical relations between the objects and their ordering. This premise is, for Han, Foucault's second rejection of Kant. The first, rejection is the one highlighted by Allen (2003): Foucault's critique of Kant's transcendentalism for its closing the opening he made in modern thought when he questioned the independence of objects from our subjectivity, an opening entailed by his conclusion that the nature of man's experience was, in part, constitutive of the nature of the objects themselves. Thus, like Allen, Han argues Foucault's work is a critique of how, by separating empirical and transcendental thought, Kant turned the a priori into an originary through which our essence is known, and it is this aspect of Kantian thought that Foucault critiques in OT.

However, contra Allen (2003), Han (1998) also argues that Foucault's critique is also of the perpetuation of the limits and conditions of the originary by the human sciences, which assumes these a priori. He critiques this because empirical knowledge aims to find the elements of transcendental, deterministic, assumptions about our nature, but will find assumptions and elements that are limited and conditioned by the conditions of possibility within particular domains of knowledge (Han, 2002). Evidencing this second aspect Han, similarly to Dreyfus and Rainbow (1982), includes Foucault's critique of the human

sciences use of positive, empirical, knowledge to define the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity. This knowledge results in empirical experience being regarded as having its own conditions of possibility, but also results in these conditions limiting our knowledge of man to the limits of what is known about man empirically – the limits of human finitude (Han, 2002). Thus, she includes Foucault critique of a mode of inquiry that is an historical and social condition constituting of our subjectivity.

Including this aspect of Foucault's critique, we are able to include his assumptions as to the subjective nature of empirical knowledge and suggest an alternative to Allen's argument that Foucault portrays the historical a priori as setting the limits of the conditions of possibility for being a thinking subject in the modern episteme. This is suggested by Sheridan (1998) when he argues that Foucault prefixes history with the term a priori to denote the limits and the conditions of possibility for knowledge constituted by domains of positivity.

Sheridan (1998) argues this because, according to Sheridan, the term positivity is used by Foucault to characterise the unity of a discourse or discipline and is a characteristic of knowledge that is made possible by assumptions as to the nature of the historical a priori (ibid, pp.101). Arguing this and describing the term positivity in relation to the a priori Sheridan makes it apparent that it is when it is associated with positivity that the a historical a prior becomes a condition of reality which limits the conditions of possibility for knowledge. This occurs when the conditions of possibility are constituted by domains of knowledge assuming these conditions a priors. As such, Foucault uses the term to refer to

an episteme in which domains of knowledge claim positive knowledge of our existence (ibid, pp.101). Thus, we can argue that rather than being tied solely to non-empirical reflection on the limits and conditions of possibility for experience the historical a priori is associated with empirical reflection on these limits and conditions. We can also suggest that Foucault's use of the notion historical a priori refers to modern intelligibility

Suggesting this, we can argue that Allen (2003) is right to assume Foucault is aware he is trapped in the paradoxes and a priori's of Kantian thought and recognised, throughout his work, the conditions constituting the limits of intellectual inquiry in post-Kantian critical thought. However, whilst we can argue this, we can also, contra Allen, posit that he has a particular, critical, conception of these limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity. Approached in this way, we can argue that Foucault's critique of the limits and conditions of possibilities for subjectivity extends beyond his providing empirical insights, to his bracketing the subject in order to develop an alternative account of the subject through which Foucault could critique the prevailing way in which we know our existence.

The aim of developing this alternative account of Foucault's critique is suggested by Baert (1998) who, similarly to Allen (2001, 2003), posits methodological continuity in Foucault's work. Unlike Allen, however, Baert includes Foucault's challenge to the human sciences as a methodological aim through which he challenges the assumption that a non self-referential type of knowledge is possible and evidences that the world cannot be explained

independently of theoretical presuppositions (see also, Smith, 2005, cited here).¹ To do this Foucault uses comparative histories in which he adopts a self-referential concept of knowledge acquisition. Baert, who focuses instead on how Foucault achieves this methodologically, does not elaborate the concept itself but he does facilitate an awareness of how Foucault's portrayal of the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge of ourselves is integral to his understanding of subjectivity.

When we consider this portrayal we can counter criticisms relating to Foucault's assumption of a constituted subject because we can discern that, for Foucault, there is a difference between knowledge constituted by positivistic domains of knowledge and knowledge constituted before the modern era. Explicating this difference we can overcome the weakness in Allen's (2000,2003) defence of Foucault's understanding of the subject because we can diverge from her claim that Foucault's project is limited to an empirical critique of non-empirical transcendentalism, wholly devoid of metaphysical, transcendental, assumptions. Rather, we develop her argument by contrasting her conclusion that Foucault in his archaeologies '[...]seems to have assumed that it was possible for the archaeologist to stand outside of her own episteme and reflect on it.' (Allen, 2003, pp.194)

Contrasting this we adhere to Allen's (2003) argument that Foucault examines the conditions of possibility of our subjectivity because these conditions are constituted by our

¹ Many argue this as a defence against criticism of Foucault's work, but do so in relation to Foucault's genealogies. However, as will be shown in Section 3.2 below, we can extend this defence to Foucault's archaeologies.

subjective experience (ibid). We also adhere to her argument that Foucault's subject takes up the thinking of the episteme and by taking up this thinking constitutes itself as subject (ibid). Where we differ is the inclusion in our interpretation of Foucault's work his bracketing the subject in order to compare the way in which the knowledge of the episteme is limiting and conditioning of our modern subjectivity.

SECTION 2

RE-CONSIDERING THE ‘ORDER OF THINGS’ – SELF-CONSTITUTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

The aim of this section is to forward an interpretation of OT that explicates Foucault's earlier presupposition of self-constitution. To achieve this I develop Paul Patton's (1998) argument the Foucault's subject is the subject of power. The intention is to show how through a concern with the conditions of possibility of our subjectivity Foucault presupposes self-constitution.

First, I briefly introduce Patton's (1998) argument in relation to Allen's (2000, 2003) suggestion that Foucault supposes a self-constituting subject. I then introduce the way in which I will approach OT and the focus of this section, Foucault's theorisation of resemblance and similitude, and his portrayal of the difference between the Renaissance and Classical knowledge. Through this focus, I evidence that Foucault forwards an account of knowledge acquisition in which he presupposes self-constitution. The suppositions within this account are clarified by briefly considering his later definition of thought and his differentiation between two forms of knowledge – ‘*savoir*’ and ‘*connaissance*’. This will explicate the relevance of Foucault's critique of epistemology for his understanding of the subject. This is shown using the way in which we understand Foucault's work as an example for how our knowledge is constituted by our epistemological assumptions.

2.1 FOUCAULT'S SUBJECT – AN ALTERNATIVE DEFENCE

When Allen argues that Foucault brackets the subject in his archaeologies and genealogies it is to defend his work from criticisms surrounding his apparent turn to the subject in his later work. This defence entails her suggestion that, rather than eliminate the subject, he examines the constitution of the subject and presupposes a self-constituting subject:

Although Foucault prefers to speak in his late work of a “self” rather than a “subject,” it seems clear that the notion of a self-constituting self presupposes some conception of a thinking subject who is capable of reflecting on what kind of self he or she wants to be and deliberating about the best way to become that sort of self, and it also presupposes some conception of an agent who is capable of acting in the world in such a way as to become the sort of self that he or she wants to be. (Allen, 2000, pp.116)

However, Allen's interpretation restricts our ability to develop this insight into Foucault's work because, for Allen, Foucault's understanding of the subject provides only conceptual tools and theoretical devices rather than an account of the subject (*ibid*, pp. 129 (footnote 33)). We can overcome this, however, when we go beyond her assumption that Foucault undertakes an empirical examination of the subject that is limited by the episteme – total body of knowledge within a given cultural context.

This can be achieved by developing her argument that Foucault is concerned with the limits and conditions of possibility of our subjectivity because these conditions are constituted by our subjective experience and, as such, Foucault's subject constitutes itself by taking up the thinking of the episteme. The development arises from the way in which Foucault understands the subject with reference to power relations, hence when Foucault describes his work in terms of the theme of the subject he does so to elaborate his approach to power (Cref. Foucault, 2000).

The relevance of power relations is made evident by Paul Patton's (1998) defence of Foucault's subject in which, like Allen (2000), he posits that Foucault held certain assumptions about the subject, implicit throughout and made explicit in his later work. In contrast to Allen, however, Patton uses the text in which Foucault elaborates his re-thinking of power to argue that Foucault presupposes a minimal conception of the human subject, in which we have power because human material is active and endowed with certain capacities to do or become certain things (ibid, pp.65). Whilst Patton (1998) leaves unconsidered just what these capacities are, his clarification of the way in which Foucault understands power provides a means by which we can discern, in OT, Foucault's conception of a thinking subject who has the power to constitute themselves through their taking up the thinking of the episteme.

This is evident when we consider OT in terms of Patton's (1998) suggestion that, for Foucault, one type of domination occurs when certain human capacities become identified and finalized within particular forms of subjectivity. This type of domination is, however, one of three forms of power in Foucault's work. The first is power in its etymological sense,

[...] as the capacity to become or to do certain things. Power in this primary sense is exercised [...] when the actions of one affect the field of possible actions of another. (Patton, 1998, pp.66)

In this primary sense, power relations are the action upon action of 'free' agents, with the proviso that,

[...] 'free' means no more than being able to act in a variety of ways: that is, having power to act in several ways, or not being constrained in such a fashion that all possibilities for action are eliminated. (ibid)

This proviso enables Patton to argue that Foucault's conception of power relations is premised on the supposition of a primary sense of power and beginning from this premise Foucault is able to conceive power relations in terms of the interaction of free agents. Thus, according to Patton the second form of power, power over, is an inescapable feature of any social interaction between agents because the actions of one can and do affect the actions of another detrimentally. It is only when there are considerable constraints to this free interaction that the last form of power, domination, arises; arising when the possibility of effective resistance is absent from social interaction, making the power relations unilateral and one-sided or the system of power relations stable and asymmetrical (Patton, 1998, pp.67-68). Crucially, because this last form arises from power in its primary sense even domination is self-constituted, hence Foucault's emphasis on the possibility of resistance (Patton, 1998).¹

It is with respect to the immanence of power with freedom and types of power that we can discern Foucault's presupposition of a constituting subject in OT. This is apparent when we focus on Foucault's theorisation of the changing nature of knowledge, as opposed to the predominant focus on the latter half of OT, in which he theorises the way in which the

¹ The way in which Foucault construes freedom is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For more on this construal see, in particular, McNay (1994) cited here who evidences the way in which Foucault conceives the conditions of possibility for freedom.

modern subject is constituted. Foucault justifies this focus in his preface to OT, making apparent its relevance to his portrayal of the modern subject.

In his preface to OT, Foucault states his archaeological inquiry revealed,

[...] two great discontinuities in the episteme of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age [...] and the second [...] marks the beginning of the modern age. (Foucault, 2001, pp. xxiv)

He also states that he is concerned with a history of resemblance (ibid, pp. xxvi), explaining why he begins OT with a theorisation of language as a form of knowledge, understood in this instance as a form of resemblance that speaks (ibid, pp.32). This is important because Foucault introduces the discontinuities in terms of the changes to resemblance, changes that were an '[...] essential rupture in the Western world.' (ibid, pp.55) and '[...] of the greatest consequence to Western thought.' (ibid, pp.60). Aware of this, we can discern what is, for Foucault, fundamental to modern subjectivity by examining the break between Renaissance and Classical knowledge and because this break is constituted by the changes in the nature of resemblance, we can approach OT as a text in which Foucault theorises the changing nature of knowledge (resemblance).

Before undertaking this, it is necessary to clarify that by proposing Foucault has presuppositions about the subject it is not my intention to attribute to Foucault a metaphysics in which he forwards a foundational theory. Neither is it to suggest that in OT we find Foucault's assumptions as to the fundamental character of reality. Rather, it is to suggest he forwards a metaphysics in the Aristotelian sense of 'being qua being' (Grayling,

1998).¹ Thus, as Han (2002) argues, Foucault in OT assumes an Aristotelian premise because he is aware that defining the conditions of possibility for subjectivity requires defining the nature of the order of things.

This is crucial because rather than the product of an inner searchlight seeking a foundational knowledge by theorising a single subject, Foucault's presuppositions about the subject are inextricable from his critique of the modern subject.. As such, I suggest Foucault's presuppositions about the subject in OT should be approached with an awareness of Aristotle's metaphysics, the nature of which is described by Marc Cohen,

Aristotle's description 'the study of being qua being' ... does not involve two things — (1) a study and (2) a subject matter (being qua being) — for he did not think that there is any such subject matter as 'being qua being'. Rather, his description involves three things: (1) a study, (2) a subject matter (being), and (3) a manner in which the subject matter is studied (qua being).²

Aware of this we can argue with Gutting (1987) that in OT Foucault characterises the Renaissance, Classical and Modern eras in terms of '[...] an episteme's fundamental manner of ordering the objects of thought and experience (its "order of things") [...]' (ibid, pp.269) and do so in order to depict both the consequences of this ordering for the nature of signs and the role the episteme's view of order and signs has for its conception of knowledge (ibid).

¹ For more on Aristotle's influence Foucault see Wolfgang, D (2005) *Foucault and classical antiquity : power, ethics and knowledge Modern European philosophy*, Cambridge University Press (transl. by Wigg-Wolf, D)

² Cohen, M.S entry for *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, online resource, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>> [Accessed Jan. 2009]

Considering the relation between the first and last of these characterisations we can discern three presuppositions about the changes, or discontinuities, in the Classical era particularly relevant to the way in which Foucault understands the subject. First, Foucault conceives of the creation of meaning in terms of the form of the relation between what can be known and the being that does the knowing. Second, in the Classical era he emphasises the way in which things can be known. Last and related, the break between Renaissance and Classical thought modifies the fundamental arrangements of the Western episteme, in particular the empirical domain, because it affects both knowledge itself and the mode of being of what is known.

Through an explication of these presuppositions we can discern how Foucault, aware of the circular relation between our self-understanding and the limits of subjectivity, presupposes a particular conception of knowledge acquisition; a conception in which one type of domination arises when particular ways of knowing ourselves become identified and finalized.

2.2 RESEMBLANCE AND SIMILITUDE – SELF-CONSTITUTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

When Foucault delineates four ‘[...] principal figures that determine knowledge of resemblance with their articulations [...]’ (Foucault, 2002, pp.20), he conceives these figures as constituting our knowledge of resemblance through the form of the relation between the

word and the thing. For Foucault when we use a word we are designating whether we are in a relation of convenience, emulation, and/or analogy with the thing and the degree of sympathy or antipathy we have towards it. Of these relations, the type of similitude we are able to recognise between things and ourselves constitutes the degree of sympathy or antipathy we have towards the thing. Thus, similitude,

[...] determines the form of knowledge (for knowledge can only follow the paths of similitude), and what guarantees its wealth of content [...] (ibid, pp.32).

Yet, whilst separating resemblance from similitude, he construes resemblances to be forms of similitude, making the sympathy or antipathy we experience towards things co-extensive with the other forms of relating to things. This is integral to his account of the subject because through his conception of resemblance as similitude Foucault attributes meaning to the relation between words and things, that is, the nature of this relation that has meaning.

We can discern in this chapter that we are constitutive of the both form and content of things through the way in which we have come to know them. Thus, we form words to give the world meaning but do so by forming a relation with the thing. In turn, the meaning of things in the world is the same as the relation we have formed through our relating ourselves to our experience of the thing. Through this construal of how meaning is constituted, Foucault deprives both the subject giving meaning to the word and the objects with meaning of substance. He does so by conceiving that the substance of meaning is in the form of the relation, rather than either the word or the thing, and conceiving that we constitute our self-understanding through our forming this relation.

It is with respect to this locating of meaning in the form of the relation that we can discern in OT how Foucault's subject is the subject of power, in that for Foucault human material is active and endowed with certain capacities to do or become certain things (Patton, 1998). This is apparent when we consider two aspects of his theorisation of resemblance and similitude. First, the nature of the being that knows acquires knowledge through the activity of knowing. It is an activity because knowledge requires learning and skills. Thus, in the Renaissance, two knowledges are constituted by the total body of learning and skills; hermeneutics, which consists of the learning and skills enabling the search for meaning by making resemblance visible, and semiology, which consists of the learning and skills that enable us to discover that things are alike by searching for laws (Foucault, 2002, pp.33). As such, these two ways of acquiring knowledge are constitutive of the nature of what can be known because of the activity through which we interpret and explain this nature. That this activity is also constitutive of our subjectivity is apparent because learning and skills are required to both interpret and explain (ibid, pp.33). In this manner, by constituting the meaning of things the things we constitute ourselves.

Second, the nature of the things that are to be interpreted has already been made visible by resemblance and what is explained are the laws by which these already visible forms of our relation to things are alike (ibid). This is crucial because Foucault posits a non-coincidence between what is known through the activity of thought and what is known through the activity of relating the things we know. Hence, he argues,

‘Nature’ is trapped in the thin layer that holds semiology and hermeneutics one above the other; it is neither mysterious nor veiled, it offers itself to our cognition, which it sometimes leads astray, only in so far as this superimposition necessarily includes a slight degree of non-coincidence between the resemblances. (ibid)

He also argues that, our nature and what one must attempt to know reside in the space left by this non-coincidence, thus,

[...] knowledge and the infinite labour it involves find here a space that is proper to them; it is their task to weave their way across this distance, pursuing an endless zig zag course from resemblance to what it resembles.(ibid)

In this way, for Foucault the content of forms of knowledge, in this instance hermeneutics and semiology, arises from the relation between resemblance and what it resembles and forms of knowledge are constituted by both what has been made visible by resemblance and the laws by which these already visible things are alike (ibid).

Whilst this can suggest that these forms of knowledge are separable from the initial creation of resemblance, by positing non-coincidence we can suggest that Foucault is proposing that the meaning of a form of knowledge is coextensive with rather than separable from, the creation of the knowledge. That is, the way in which we have come to know the thing (i.e. how we know) is in a constituting relation with the way in which we have formed a relation between ourselves and the thing (i.e. how we define what we know).

Integral to the ability to suggest this, is Foucault's depiction of the two types of knowledge that constitute the form of our relation to things; that is, the way in which we know ourselves involves different types of knowledge acquisition. This is apparent in Foucault's

construing resemblance as a form of similitude because construed in this way the content guaranteeing knowledge is experiential,

[...] The movement and dispersion created by its [similitudes] laws, the sovereignty of the sympathy-antipathy pair gives rise to all the forms of resemblance. The first three similitudes are thus all resumed and explained by it. (ibid, pp.28)

Positing that sympathy and antipathy determine the path of resemblance, Foucault presupposes that the way in which we know is constituted by our experience of what we know. Yet, whilst similitude guarantees the content of what we know, the content constitutes a form of resemblance through our ordering, rather than our experience, of things. The constituting role by our ordering of things has is apparent in Foucault's portrayal of the nature of resemblance itself. Thus,

Resemblance never remains stable within itself; it can be fixed only if it refers to others; each resemblance, therefore, has value only from the accumulation of all the others and the whole world must be explored if even the slightest of analogies is to be justified and finally take on the appearance of certainty. It is therefore a knowledge that can, and must, proceed by the infinite accumulation of confirmations all dependant on one another. And for this reason, from its very foundations, this knowledge will be a thing of sand. (ibid, pp.34)

Considering this portrayal we can discern that, for Foucault, our ability to know the meaning of resemblance occurs through the accumulation of the meanings resemblances have in relation to each other. Crucially, this accumulation happens when, in order to understand the meaning of the relation we have formed between things, we use interpretations and explanations that relate resemblances to each other. Given this, we can suggest that whilst similitude determines the meaning of resemblances, experience is only

one side of knowledge acquisition, the other side is formed through our capacity to understand the relation between the meanings that exist in the world, a capacity realized in and through our accumulation and ordering of the meaning of things.

This explains why Foucault suggests that the relation between resemblance and what it resembles is constitutive of the discourse of similitude, rather than the nature of similitude (ibid, pp.33). It explains this because we can argue that, for Foucault, as with the relation between words and things, both the content and form of knowledge and the discourse of similitude are constituted by the form of the relation between our understanding of our experience and a particular way of knowing resemblances. Thus, the discourse of similitude is separable from resemblance because it is constituted when we explain our interpretations. This implies that through our forming knowledge about how we understand our experiences we superimpose another experience (i.e. sympathy or antipathy) on the initial, constituting experience, one that includes the knowledge of how we understand this experience in relation to others.

In this manner, we can argue that by searching for meaning and establishing relationships between them, we actively constitute both the form of knowledge and our self-understanding. Thus, both self-understanding and knowledge are experiential, but both are also co-extensive with our capacity to order these understandings when we form a relation with knowledge about our experience.

This inter-relation between experience, knowledge, and self-understanding is given clarity when we consider Foucault's use of two different terms for knowledge. Clarity arises because these terms demonstrate how Foucault's presuppositions about the subject arise from the relation between the self-referential conception of the subject he presupposes and what are, for Foucault, the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge of self-reflexivity.

THE SELF-REFLEXIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE

In his editorial to a collected works, Fabion (2000, pp. xxv-xxix), highlights that Foucault uses two different terms when referring to knowledge, *savoir*, which translates as 'to know' in a theoretical or abstract sense and *connaissance*, which translates as acquaintance or familiarity with someone or something. However, because of the difficulty of consistently registering the difference between *connaissance* and *savoir* in English the nuances of these different meanings are often glossed in translation.¹ Highlighting these two meanings Fabion argues Foucault's conception of knowledge is differentiated from that prevailing in the Anglo-American context. This is because Foucault does not use knowledge in its philosophical sense, as justifiable and verifiable, rather he uses it to denote both to know through understanding our learning and experience (*connaissance*), and to know the total body of facts or those associated with a particular subject; which may be purely theoretical or abstract (*savoir*) (ibid). Aware of this differentiation Fabion argues that Foucault

¹ This glossing of the different terms for knowledge used by Foucault meant that I was unable to consider these terms in relation to OT because I am unable to read French version of OT.

assumes the reflexivity of subject as the co-determinacy of the psyche (Fabion, 2000, pp xxv).

Foucault's assumption of reflexivity is evident to Hacking (1994), who is also aware of the importance of Foucault's using two words for knowledge. Hacking further clarifies these two terms when he suggests that *savoir* is surface knowledge that is made possible by the conditions of possibility of an episteme. This is differentiated from *connaissance*, which Hacking construes as knowledge with depth. It has depth because this type of knowledge makes sense with reference to the discourse of *savoir* and because of this, the conditions of possibility for *connaissance* stem from *savoir* (ibid, pp.117-119). Or, as Foucault explains,

I use the word “*savoir*” [“knowledge”] while drawing a distinction between it and the word “*connaissance*” [“knowledge”]. I see “*savoir*” as a process by which the subject undergoes a modification through the very things that one knows [*conna’it*] or, rather, in the course of the work that one does in order to know. It is what enables one both to modify the subject and to construct the object. *Connaissance* is the work that makes it possible to multiply the knowable objects, to manifest their intelligibility, to understand their rationality, while maintaining the fixity of the inquiring subject... So there is always this involvement with oneself within one’s own *savoir*. (Foucault, 2000a, pp.256-257)

Given this, and following Fabion’s (2000) translation of the terms *savoir* and *connaissance*, we can suggest that theoretical or abstract knowledge (*savoir*) is acquired by our becoming acquainted with something through our learning and experience. As such, theoretical or abstract knowledge is made possible by our learning and experience (*connaissance*), making theoretical or abstract knowledge something we actively constitute and a form of

knowledge that modifies our relation to ourselves because of these experiences and our learning. Thus, *connaissance* modifies our relation to ourselves and is a form of knowledge that makes it possible to constitute *savoir*.

This begins to evidence the importance of Foucault's understanding of knowledge for his understanding of the subject. The importance is highlighted by Racevskis (1994) who, in order to evidence the importance of the relation between our self-understanding and knowledge, further elaborates these two terms for knowledge. Racevskis considers the more analytic distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance* in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2004) and defines *savoir* as the domain of knowledge in which the subject is situated. In contrast, *connaissance*, because it is related consciousness, is fully subjective. However, for Racevskis, *savoir* is neither empirical nor transcendental and because they both constitute knowledge neither *savoir* or *connaissance* have originary status and neither exist in a causal relation with the different possibilities for how our subjectivity can be constituted (Racevskis, 1994, pp.139-140).¹

¹ Racevskis (1994) use of Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002) is pertinent because using this text he elaborates the meaning of these two terms for knowledge with reference to discourse, discursive practices and discursive strategies. This is pertinent because it highlights Foucault's struggle to conceptualise his thinking. Yet given the interpretation of resemblance and similitude in terms of the activity of knowledge acquisition we can suggest that the terms resemblance and similitude are the initial notions enabling Foucault to conceptualise these two different meanings for knowledge, moving away from using them as his thinking gained further clarity. Hence, episteme becomes the archive in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002) but retains a similar meaning (Sheridan, 1980 cited here).

Defining these two types of knowledge in this way, Racevskis argues that Foucault's subject is the subject of knowledge in both senses of the word, both subject to and subjugated by knowledge (ibid). That is, subjects are necessarily constituted by knowledge and can be subjugated by it but in both instances this knowledge has been constituted by the subject. This is because whilst constituted by the domains of knowledge that enable us to understand ourselves (the domains we are situated in), these domains are formed and are given power through the relation between the knowledge in these domains – *savoir* – and our subjective knowledge – *connaissance*.

Aware of this we can suggest that Foucault's differentiation between *savoir* and *connaissance* is akin to his theorisation of resemblance and similitude in OT. We can suggest this because in OT our acquaintance with the meaning of things arises from the form of the relation between words and things and the four types of relating to things are different but interrelated ways through which we come to know the thing. Hence, *connaissance*, like resemblance, is constituted through the interrelation between our acquaintance with things and our relation to ourselves and this interrelation is formed through the learning and skills that are required in order for us to search for meaning and find links between these meanings. As such, resemblance, like *connaissance*, can be regarded as a primary activity because through which we come to know ourselves in relation to things, a knowledge developed through our experiences and our ordering of these experiences. In turn, similitude can be likened to *savoir* and regarded as secondary knowledge that is constituted by both the type of resemblance it is associated with and the

activities through which we form a relation between ourselves and abstract or theoretical knowledge.

In this vein, we can suggest that our secondary experience of things – our discourse – is constitutive of our subjectivity because of the activity – learning and skills – through which we understand it, rather than because it is determining of them. Hence, the form of our knowledge of resemblance and the discourse of similitude are both constitutive of our subjective experience but are also co-extensive rather than separable from or immanent with our self-understanding.¹

This is evident to Deleuze (1988) who argues that Foucault conceives power relations as arising from the relations between two forms of formed knowledges and forwards an interpretation of how, when it is constituted by these forms, subjectivity is intentional. This interpretation posits that, for Foucault, everything is knowledge but knowledge is, for Foucault, an affect of the self by the self because it is created by external forces which, whilst they are external to our subjectivity are co-extensive with the forces creating knowledge that are internal to the individual. Thus, knowledge constitutes the self by forming that which is coextensive with these inside forces (ibid, pp.112-113).

¹ This interpretation of resemblance and similitude is influenced by Deleuze's (1988) interpretation of Foucault's work in which *savoir* is understood as knowing that is constituted by the gap between seeing and speaking (pp. 35, cited here).

When considered in this way, the activity of knowing supposed by Foucault can be seen to exist in a circular relation with the forms of knowledge it has constituted because this knowledge is constituted by the two-fold nature of thought (thought as resemblance, which constitutes *connaissance* and thought as similitude, which constitutes *savoir*). This makes resemblance both constituted by and constitutive of knowledge because the moment of feedback to similitude modifies our self-understanding. Thus, as Foucault sums towards the end of OT,

[...] what is essential is that thought, both for itself and in the density of its workings, should be both knowledge and a modification of what it knows, reflection and a transformation of the mode of being of that which it reflects (Foucault, 2002, pp.357).

Given this, we can suggest that both the primary relation and the secondary relation arise from the way in which we acquire knowledge.¹

Evidence for this suggestion is provided by Foucault's theorisation of equivalence between the word and the thing. Whilst he posits equivalence, Foucault also makes it apparent that external inputs into our subjectivity do not simply become outputs or vice versa and neither knowledge nor self-understanding are created in a linear manner. Rather, what is most apparent in his theorisation of words and things is the degree of self-reference involved in

¹ A consideration of which knowledge, *savoir* or *connaissance*, Foucault refers to throughout OT is impeded by my inability to read French and the absence of any secondary sources highlighting which term is used. The theorisation, however, does suggest that two knowledges are being referred to and the characterisation of these knowledges does suggest that the distinction is being made in a way that reflects the two terms for knowledge in French. This is validated by Foucault's making the distinction explicit in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2000a) because this text followed OT and was, in part, intended to clarify the methodology used and assumptions made by Foucault in OT.

each of the forms of resemblance, with the creation of each form implicated in the creation of the other. As such, we are unable to discern the essential meaning of the thing.

Given this, we are able to suggest that Foucault, in OT Foucault, ensures there is no essential nature in his conception of the subject, enabling him to portray, in the place of this nature, the self-referential nature of thought. Thus, we are unable to discern one essential meaning and unable to claim that Foucault conceives of a meaning that is essential to our self-understanding: that is, we are unable to discern a correlation between the meaning attributed to the thing and our understanding of this thing. This differentiates Foucault's understanding of knowledge from dialectical formulations of knowledge and because our subjective experiences have no essential meaning Foucault's conception of self-understanding, contra Kant's, is one in which subjectivity has no an essential limit or conditions of possibility. Rather, Foucault conceives the relational nature of meaning creation, depicting the ordering of meaning through the nature of the relation between the subject who knows and the object they know in the place of foundational or originary experiences. He also conceives the activity through which we know as an activity constituted in accordance with and therefore contingent to a particular context.

In this manner, we can claim that in the place of foundational or originary experiences Foucault depicts the ordering of meaning through the nature of the relation between the subject who knows and the object the subject knows. This explains why, whilst we can delineate between each form of resemblance and between resemblance and similitude, we

can neither discern which of these forms of knowledge are originary to the act of knowing, nor which meaning is the derivative of an attribute or property of the world or mind. Rather, by emphasising the relational and situated nature of the way in which we create meaning Foucault associates both the nature of what can be known and the nature of the being that does the knowing with the process through which we know.

Given this, it is crucial to Foucault's account of the subject that his demarcation between the Renaissance and Classical era includes a differentiation between the nature of resemblance in these eras.

2.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PRIVILEGING – THE LIMITS AND CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY OF MEANING

For Foucault the modifications occurring in the Classical episteme are such that the '[...] entire *episteme* of Western culture found its fundamental arrangements modified.' (Foucault, 2002, pp.60, Foucault's italics) The way in which these arrangements changed is summarised by Gutting (2001),

The fundamental way in which things are related for Renaissance thought is resemblance. The basic relation between any two objects will not depend on (as will be the case for later periods) the essential properties that they share or fail to share or on the causal functions they do or do not have in common. The relation is rather due to the similarities (e.g., analogies) in virtue of which they resemble one another. (ibid, pp.269)

That is, in the Renaissance the essence of things is constituted by establishing the relation between the thing and ourselves through our comparing and finding correspondences between our being and the being of thing. In contrast, from the Classical era onwards our relation is to the way in which things can be known rather than the being of things (ibid, pp.60). This is because we come to relate to the total body of acquired knowledge. Thus, Foucault characterizes the Classical episteme in terms of the relation maintained between Western culture and a universal science of order and depicts an era in which new forms of knowledge are part of a '[...]single network of necessities'(Foucault, 2002, pp.70).

This is integral to Foucault's understanding of the subject because in the Classical episteme epistemology is privileged as a means of establishing certainty by verifying the susceptibility of domains of knowledge to error (Grayling, 1998). However, by depicting the modifications arising from this privileging as occurring at the level of resemblance and similitude, it is the modifications to the conditions of possibility - the arrangements of the episteme – that are fundamental. They are fundamental because changes in the way in which we order things will not only affect our conception of knowledge but also the way in which we know ourselves.

As part of this network of necessities since the seventeenth century, '[...] every resemblance must be subjected to proof by comparison [...]' (Foucault, 2002, pp.61), and the nature of resemblance will be unacceptable until it is measured by a common unit and the position of this common unit within an order (ibid). With this change, rather than

searching for meaning by comparing things within the infinite interplay of similitude, comparison now searches for certainty and a complete account of our experiences:

Comparison [...] can attain to perfect certainty: the old system of similitude, never complete and always open to fresh possibilities, could, it is true, through successive confirmations, achieve steadily increasing probability; but it was never certain. (Foucault, 2002, pp.61)

Consequently,

[...] thought ceases to move in the element of resemblance. Similitude is no longer the form of knowledge but rather the occasion of error [...] (Foucault 2002, pp.56)

This modification occurs because the relation between things arises from the mind's ability to discriminate between them and establish their identity. We do this by relating them to each other in a successive series and by establishing the degree of differences between them in this series (ibid). Thus, we establish the identity of the thing based on what we consider their being to be. As such, when thought no longer moves within the element of resemblance we no longer form a relation to ourselves through the meaning of our relation to things. Rather, we form a relation to ourselves through our relation to the meaning of the common unit identified by the total body of knowledge. In turn, our experience of the thing is formed by the relation between the meaning of the thing (its identity) and its position within the order constituted by the total body of knowledge (ibid, pp.60). Thus, for Foucault, in the Classical era, our relation to ourselves arises from our knowledge of the identity of things and because of this resemblance is no longer '[...] the fundamental experience and primary form knowledge [...]' (ibid, pp.66). Consequently,

What makes the totality of the Classical episteme possible is primarily the relation to a knowledge of order. (ibid, pp.79)

This is a contrast to the Renaissance, in which forms of knowledge are constituted by the possible meanings for and our understandings of our experiences, rather than our ordering things by their identity. Thus, in this earlier era we ordered them by establishing links between the meanings we uncovered and by relating ourselves to the thing through our searching for and linking together this meaning.

This alteration to the ordering of knowledge modifies the way in which we come to know the thing because it dissociates the content given to knowledge by our experience of things from the form of our knowledge of the thing. Hence, Foucault states that when our relation to things is constituted by the total body of acquired knowledge the form and content of knowledge are dissociated and because of this there is a modification to what makes possible '[...] both knowledge itself and the mode of being of what is to be known' (ibid, pp.60). That is, there is a modification to both the activity of thought and to what is known through the activity of relating what is known.

It is with regard to this dissociation and the consequent modifications to resemblance and similitude that it is important to highlight Foucault's positing a non-coincidence between what is known (of things), first, through the activity of thought and second, through the activity of establishing relations between what is known. It is important because through this dissociation our knowledge about the way in which we know – epistemology –

constitutes the limit and conditions the possibilities of what we can know of ourselves. Thus, when dissociated, the relation between resemblance and imagination will limit and condition the nature of what we can know about ourselves (ibid, pp.74-79).

When considered in terms of his portrayal of resemblance and similitude in the Renaissance, our understanding of the world is guaranteed by the meaning we form through our experience of the world (similitude). In contrast, since the Classical era our experience is guaranteed by the way in which we order the meaning of these experiences. Thus, when there is dissociation between the form and content of knowledge our perceptions become judgements that are constituted by our establishing what the identity of human nature is. This identity, however, can be known only in terms of our relation to the other possible ways of knowing ourselves within the episteme – the total body of knowledge (ibid, pp.60-84).

In terms of our self-reflexive acquisition of knowledge, this change in our understanding of ourselves occurs because rather than relating to ourselves through the way in which we relate ourselves to things we now relate to ourselves through the relation between ourselves and the possible ways of knowing these experiences. That is, the primary activity through which we come to know ourselves in relation to things through our experiences and our ordering of these experiences becomes subordinate to our relation to the forms of knowledge through which our understanding of what can be known can be related to our knowledge of ourselves. Thus, for Foucault in the Classical era, similitude is placed in a

limiting and conditional position (ibid, pp.75-76). This position is such that the form of resemblance can be manifested only by our imagination because imagination can be exercised with the aid of resemblance (ibid). Thus, '[W]ithout imagination, there would be no resemblance between things' (ibid, pp.76).

Gutting (2001) summarises the consequences of this for Foucault's portrayal of modern knowledge in OT when he discerns a division between the,

[...] analytic knowledge of logical and conceptual truths and synthetic knowledge of contingent facts. This division leads, in turn, to the distinction between formal (a priori) and empirical (a posteriori) disciplines [and a further] division between the formal and the empirical disciplines, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other. (Gutting, 2001, pp271)

Both divisions occur because the relation between knowledge of subjectivity and our subjectivity is established through the reciprocal bond between resemblance and imagination, a bond that has meaning because it is constituted by the analytic of imagination and the analysis of nature, both of which are united in the idea of genesis (Foucault, 2002, pp.77-78).

When this idea of genesis arises the way in which we know nature and human nature within the general configuration of the episteme becomes paramount because imagination is conceived as one of the properties of human nature and resemblance one of the effects of

nature (ibid, pp.78). Conceived in this way, nature and human nature are known without reference to the possibilities for the form of the relation between our experiences and understanding of things. Rather, each is known with reference to the total body of knowledge – the episteme. Thus, for Foucault, in the analytic of imagination we constitute resemblance by comparing our knowledge of things before their meaning is quantified in accordance with an order. That is, before meaning is created in accordance with the way in which our experiences are currently understood by the episteme, rather than the possible ways in which they *could be* understood (ibid, pp.76-79). Through this, the relation between things will be reduced to binary groups in which the same and the different are separated (ibid, pp.78-84). Hence, through the analytic of imagination, we understand our nature because of the meaning we give to our imagination and because we associate ourselves with this meaning. For example, we understand ourselves as mad when the identity of mad men is separated from that of poets, with both identities serving opposing functions (ibid, pp.54-55).

This meaning is also understood through analysis of our nature that links resemblance and imagination in a way that re-creates the facts of nature prior to the present order (ibid, pp.77-78). As an example of this, Foucault highlights the imagining of the hypothetical first man in this era and relates this to how we understood the general configuration of the episteme (ibid). This evidences how our knowledge of our nature prior to order will be the same as our understanding of this nature within our present because it is produced by an account of the non-actual comparisons and analysis of impressions, reminiscence, imagination and memory (ibid). In this manner, as with the analytic of imagination, by

relating to what we know in this way the limits and conditions of possibility of our subjectivity are those of the total body of knowledge – the episteme. As such, our self-understanding is formed through confirmations of an identity constituted by already finalised understandings of our nature (ibid).

It is through these two ways of understanding ourselves that the modern era continues, albeit in another form, the self-understanding that has been constituted by the reciprocal bond between resemblance and imagination. This is because this bond constituted the concepts of nature and human nature and these are the concepts through which we understand ourselves. This limits and conditions our self-understanding in accordance with the particular relation between knowledge of subjectivity and the subjectivity we form. This can be suggested because in the Classical era the concepts of nature and human nature arise from the dissociation of the activity through which we order meaning from our capacity to understand ourselves. Through this dissociation of the form and content of knowledge, we establish the identity of human nature, knowing this identity through our relation to the other possible ways of knowing ourselves within the total body of knowledge. In this way, rather than the form of our relation to meaning and our understanding of this meaning constituting knowledge, it is now the relation between the meaning of things and the science of order that constitutes knowledge.

This suggestion is integral to the way in which Foucault understands the subject because it facilitates an understanding of how power exists in the activity of free subjects and in the

realm of the possibilities. Hence, by elaborating this we can develop Patton's (1998) suggestion that Foucault's understanding of the subject involves his use of the notion of power in the primary sense, as something that is exercised when our actions affect the possibilities for action of others. In this vein, Foucault's portrayal of the Classical era is crucial to his understanding of the subject because it demonstrates that, for Foucault, the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjectivity are the limits and conditions of possibility of the way in which we know subjectivity.

THE LIMITS AND CONDITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Two aspects of the portrayal of resemblance and similitude are crucial to the way in which Foucault's presupposes power's relation to the subject. First, we realize our power through both the way in which we search for meaning and the learning and skills that will enable us to relate meanings to each other. As such, it is through the way we know that we constitute both our nature and the nature of what we know. This is because we constitute our self-understanding through our constitution of the relation between our experiences of things and what we understand of this experience. Second, it is this relation that is limited and conditioned by our constitution of the way in which we know the world in the Classical episteme.

This second suggestion is immanent with the first because the limits and conditions of the possibilities for self-understanding, even when they constitute stable and asymmetrical or

unilateral and one-sided power relations, are self-constituted (Patton, 1995). They are immanent because limitations to the possibilities of meaning always exist in the interaction between the learning and skills constituting meaning and our capacity to order this meaning through our understanding of it. Hence, to create understandable meanings we relate this meaning to ourselves by forming a relation between this understanding and other possible ways of understanding meanings.

We can argue this because our identities and natures have the power to constitute through the activity through which we know. It is this activity that is increasingly limited and conditioned by our knowledge of the best possible way to understand ourselves; that is, our actions, or in this instance, our learning and skills, are increasingly limited. In this manner, the forms of knowledge and the discourse of our experience (discourse of similitude) within them can be regarded as one of two levels of thought that constitute knowledge. As with resemblance and similitude – or *connaissance* and *savoir* –, the primary level is coexistent with but separable from another, secondary, level of thought and through this coexistence we constitute our self-understanding. In turn, this self-understanding exists in a self-modifying relation with the activity we undertake to form the relation between what we experience and our understanding of these experiences. Hence, Foucault posits that knowledge has two sides, one of which is the mode of being of knowledge (Foucault, 2002, pp.60).

When we consider this further we can discern why, in OT, Foucault posits that power relations are constituted through the relation between imagination and resemblance (Foucault, 2002, pp.66-67). Foucault portrays the Classical episteme as an era in which we relate to the mode of being of thought rather than thought itself. When we do this, we form our understanding of ourselves through our understanding of the objects we know and domination can arise through the activity of meaning creation and our capacity for understanding this meaning. It arises here because the way in which we know ourselves can be limited to a particular way of knowing ourselves and the world. Thus, for Foucault, in the Renaissance the limitation is that of always knowing the same (ibid, pp.111). In the Classical era, the limitation is that of the binary identities and non-actual natures (ibid, pp.66-84).¹

In both instances, the subject constitutes the totality and limits the otherwise limitless possibilities for meaning. However, in the Classical era because the limitation arises from the way in which our self understandings are related to what it is possible to know, our being can be known 'qua being' and our understanding of ourselves can be related to the way in which studies of our existence are undertaken. The importance of this for Foucault's understanding of our self-constitution is clarified by Foley (2001), who argues that Descartes answers the question of how am I to know how to make up my own mind by forwarding advice about how to proceed intellectually. Crucially, through this advice we

¹ For the importance of Foucault's historicising the limits and conditions of possibility for way in which we constitute our identities see O'Farrell (1989) cited here.

constitute the conditions of possibility for what can be recognised as rational knowledge.¹ As such, since the Classical era, the goal of advice is to provide an enlightening and recognizable notion of rational belief; enlightening because it helps us think about our relation to prevailing knowledge and recognisable because it helps us to understand the rational beliefs we create (Foley, 2001).

Given this, as Foley (2001) argues, one of the conditions of possibility for knowledge has to be considered fundamental to our being rational because to be rational is to recognise ourselves in what we have created as rational. That is, we need advising only if we assume that the way in which we have constituted rationality is applicable to us, which depends on our understanding ourselves to be rational beings – as opposed to irrational. As such, the advice will ascribe what we should consider to be rational by reinforcing a particular construction of ourselves as rational.

In this manner, our adherence to intellectual advice is entailed by the assumption – a priori or a posteriori – that the conditions through which rationality is constituted are the same conditions that make the advice applicable to us. This is because without either a fundamental nature or attributes that are fundamental to our nature, the way we think about prevailing knowledge is historically and contextually contingent. Given this, advice about what we need to do to study ourselves is valid only if we seek to legitimate particular social

¹ The comparison between Foucault's construal of this question in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002) and Descartes is elaborated by McGill, A (1979), 'Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History', pp.451-503, in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 51, No. 3. (Sept.)

and historical conditions by prescribing the way in which we can reflect on and possibly change these conditions and ourselves.¹

The influence this has on the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge is evident in the demarcation between defences and criticisms of Foucault's work. The nature of this demarcation is evident to Patton (1995) when he counters Charles Taylor's (1995a) criticisms that Foucault lacks a coherent theory of power; the lack arising from Foucault's failure to provide a standard by which we can judge forms of power as either positive – empowering – or negative – oppressive – types of power (1995b).² In summary, to counter Taylor's criticism, Patton highlights that Foucault's approach to the subject differs from Charles Taylor's because Foucault refuses to adhere to the rational way of thinking Taylor assumes necessary for our knowledge of ourselves. That is, Foucault refuses to adhere to advice about what we need to do to have a valid theorisation of the subject and it is because of this that Foucault has an inherently different conception of agency and autonomy, and thus, an alternative understanding of freedom and power.

This highlights how the requisite of normative, evaluative criteria for our knowledge limits and conditions the possibilities for being a thinking subject who is capable of reflecting on what kind of self he or she wants to be. Whilst we have the power to constitute our subjectivity in a way that replicates our understanding of what is negative or positive for

¹ For the relevance of Foucault's critique of the Classical episteme for philosophy influenced by Descartes, see Wolfgang, D (2005) *Foucault and classical antiquity: power, ethics and knowledge Modern European philosophy*, Cambridge University Press (transl. by Wigg-Wolf, D).

² For others who make similar criticisms of Foucault's understanding of the subject see Dews (1995a, 1995b), Fraser (1981) and Habermas (1994, 1995), cited here.

ourselves, the way in which we are able to understand ourselves is conditioned by the methods that have become a pre-requisite for rational enquiry into our existence. It is the insistence on our using these methods that the various ways in which we can constitute knowledge are limited by the actions of others: in this instance, by the way in which others constitute their own knowledge. Thus, the requisite that inquires into our existence forward normative criteria by which to judge our existence limits our freedom to act: in this instance, our freedom to construct a different knowledge by thinking differently. In this vein, we can suggest that a form of domination occurs when our creation of knowledge and our capacity to understand ourselves is limited to a specific way of knowing ourselves.

This form of domination is evident in Allen's (2003) argument that Foucault adheres to the aporias and paradoxes of modern Kantian knowledge. This implies that the possibilities for subjective experience are limited and conditioned by the way in which, since Kant, knowledge is intelligible to us. Thus, Allen limits Foucault to a particular way of thinking, one that is in accordance with the way of thinking considered rational by the total body of knowledge within a particular environment; knowledge constituted by particular social and historical conditions. As such, Allen (2003) limits and conditions Foucault's freedom to constitute himself through his reflection on our social and political situation because she limits and conditions the way in which Foucault can search for and understand meanings.

In this manner, Allen's (2003) argument also demonstrates how domination is immanent with the limits and conditions of possibility of our subjective experience. It is through our capacity for self-understanding that we are capable of reflecting on our social and political

situation and decide whether it has positive or negative effects on ourselves. This reflection entails first, that we know how our existence should be and thereby whether or not we are living in a way that has positive or negative affects on ourselves. Second, that we can assign responsibility for these affects and escape any that we consider to be negative by altering our actions. As such, it is our self-conscious ability to make sense of the world that enables us judge our existence and create our understanding of what we consider to be negative or positive for ourselves. Once created or altered we can, as agents, constitute the conditions that replicate this self-understanding.

Given this, we can argue that whilst the freedom to constitute our subjectivity is limited by the possibilities for creating or altering our self-understanding, the subject has the power to constitute their subjectivity in a way that replicates their own understanding of what is negative or positive for our existence. This suggestion can be developed by considering the concomitance between the way in which Foucault understands the subject and his understanding of how possibilities for our knowledge are limited. Elaborating this, we can discern the basis on which Allen, rightly, suggests that Foucault's subject takes up the thinking of the episteme and in so doing constitutes itself as subject (Allen, 2003).

SECTION 3

INCLUDING FOUCAULT'S PRESUPPOSITIONS – VIABILITY, EFFECTIVE THEORY AND FOUCAULT'S PROJECT

This section will develop the argument and interpretation of the preceding sections to elaborate the importance of including Foucault's supposition of self-constitution. To do this I use the alternative suggestions Allen (2003) makes when she briefly sums the issues surrounding how Foucault's project is possible, focusing on the suggestion that Foucault stands outside the episteme.

First, I highlight what Allen (2003) considers effective theory to be and show how this limits and conditions the meaning of Foucault's work. To do this I use Smith's (2005) interpretation of Foucault's OT as a challenge to positivism. Second, I show the way in which Foucault's self-professed happy positivist stance relates to his critique of the human sciences.¹ This will suggest that a point of consistency between Foucault's archaeologies and genealogies is his portrayal of the positivistic limits and conditions of possibility. It will also further evidence the way in which power is inherent in the way we constitute knowledge. Last, I highlight the applicability of the third option Allen suggests for how Foucault's project is possible; Foucault is neither wholly inside nor outside the episteme. I

¹ This stance is attributed to Foucault in light of his text *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), in which he elaborates his archaeological method. This elaboration remains frequently used to argue that Foucault adopts a structuralist approach in which he assumes a subject that is determined by the structure of language, which exists as a totality that is external to the subject. The phrase itself is influenced by Foucault stating, in this text,

If, by substituting the analysis of rarity for the search for totalities, the description of relations of exteriority for the theme of the transcendental foundation, the analysis of accumulations for the quest of the origin, one is a positivist, then I am quite happy to be one (Foucault, 2002, pp.141).

consider this in order to propose a way in which Foucault's understanding of the subject is effective.

3.1 INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE EPISTEME?

The interpretation of OT given above contrasts Allen's (2003) characterisation of Foucault's project as an empirical critique of non-empirical transcendentalism wholly devoid of metaphysical, transcendental, assumptions. By way of a contrast, it evidences that in OT Foucault presupposed self-constitution in a particular way and begins to show how the viability of Foucault's work stems from his particular understanding of the limits and conditions of possibility for the way in which we know. This can be evidenced further by considering Allen's delineation of the central issues influencing our understanding of Foucault's project, issues arising from answers to the questions Allen highlights as central to the way in which Foucault's work is understood; how is Foucault's project possible and from which perspective does Foucault speak?

Allen delineates these alternatives for understanding Foucault's work because our answers to these questions lead to two criticisms surrounding Foucault's work. First, when Foucault's project is considered possible because he stands outside of the episteme he is criticised for the contradiction between this position and his claim that the episteme sets the necessary possibilities for subjectivity (Cref. Allen, 2003). Second, when it is made possible because he is standing inside the episteme, he is criticised for undermining the way in which Foucault claims the episteme sets the conditions of possibility (Allen, 2003) (see,

for example, Dews, 1995, 1995a, below; Fraser, 1981, Habermas 1994, 1995; Taylor, 1995, 1995a).

Yet, we cannot viably uphold criticism stemming from his, alleged, adoption of such a position outside of the episteme – total body of knowledge – because we are unable to argue that Foucault's critique of the conditions of possibilities for subjectivity is separable from existing knowledge about the subject. This is because we are embedded in historically and contextually contingent conditions and when embedded, there is no outside position from which to reason about our existence. Hence, when Foucault is criticised for standing outside of the episteme he is not criticised for actually standing outside the episteme, but rather for *assuming* he can. Given this, we have to acknowledge that both the way in which Foucault makes claims about the episteme and his assumptions as to the way in which the episteme sets the conditions of possibility for subjectivity, are claims made from a position within the episteme.

This begins to explain why the viability of Foucault's claims about the subject are inseparable from his concern with the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjectivity. This is evident to Smith (2005) who argues that the logic and conventions separating different reflective practices reinforce and perpetuate the premise or worldview of the disciplines adhering to them. They do so because these practices prescribe a particular way of knowing our existence on the assumption that this way of knowing is the most rational way to understand our existence (*ibid*; see also, Foley, cited here). In this manner, the prevailing way in which we acquire knowledge is perpetuated by the logic and

conventions of rational intellectual inquiry because they condition the way in which we which know the world.

Highlighting this we can discern that when understood in terms of his being either inside or outside the episteme, we understand Foucault by measuring the extent to which he adheres to the logic and conventions of rational intellectual inquiry assumed necessary by particular domains of knowledge. Thus, as Allen (2000) argues, by criticising Foucault for being either inside or outside the episteme his account of our existence is regarded as ineffective methodologically. For example, when Foucault is criticised for determinism he is criticised for having a methodologically inadequate understanding of our existence (ibid, pp.116). In this vein, there is an association between how Foucault understands the subject and the way in which he forwards this understanding. As Allen argues, the association is that those forwarding these criticisms assume,

[...] effective social and political theory should enable us to escape the trap of cultural determinism and to assign responsibility and blame for the differential ability to exercise power and to access social goods that characterizes Western societies. (Allen, 2000, pp.117)

This requisite of effective theory is crucial to the viability of Foucault's work because it is this requirement that will determine what are recognisable as negative or positive conditions for our existence. The way in which it is crucial becomes evident when we consider the notion of positivism and Foucault's declaring himself to be happy if he is thought to be a positivist (Foucault, 2000a, pp.142).

RE-CONSIDERING FOUCAULT'S PROJECT – HAPPY POSITIVISM

Arguing that Foucault brackets the subject, Allen (2000) adheres to Dreyfus and Rainbow's (1982) characterisation of Foucault's archaeological approach. This adherence continues when Allen suggests that Foucault's departure from his archaeological stance occurs because he no longer adopts a position in which he '[...] seems to have assumed that it was possible for the archaeologist to stand outside of her own episteme and reflect on it [...]' (Allen, 2003, pp.194). Allen is then able to contend that Foucault's genealogies, unlike his archaeologies, reflect his awareness that he is inside of the episteme and aware of the impossibility of a position outside of society. Similarly, for Dreyfus and Rainbow his genealogical approach is developed in response to his learning he is not exempt from the social practices he studies and unable to think beyond existing theories of subjectivity. In this vein, Dreyfus and Rainbow and Allen argue that Foucault's development of his genealogical approach reflects his change of perspective: a change reflecting his awareness of the impossibility of a perspective outside of the conditions constituting our rationality.

It is not necessarily problematic to suggest an alteration to Foucault's perspective, especially as there is, as Foucault acknowledges, a change of method and focus with his genealogical approach to power. What is problematic with this argument is the suggestion that in his archaeologies Foucault theorised the affects of our social situation on our self-understanding whilst claiming to be outside of the episteme. When approached in this way, Foucault is assumed to forward a normative account of modernity, which is difficult to reconcile with his critique of foundationalism, in which he critiques the way rationality has

been constituted and contests prescriptions about the way in which we can reflect on ourselves (see, for example, Dews, 1995; Fraser, 1981; Habermas, 1994, 1995).

Failing to counter such criticism is particularly problematic for Allen's (2000, 2003) defence of Foucault's work because Allen aimed to counter arguments such as this by suggesting that he changed his perspective in his later work. Her inability to achieve this, highlights that our idea of what is methodologically effective is not necessarily applicable to Foucault's work. This becomes more apparent when we consider Foucault's description of himself as happy to be regarded as a positivist (Foucault, 2002a, pp.141). A description frequently used as evidence for his earlier position within the episteme and, in turn, either used as evidence for his change of perspective or for the contradictions in his work.

O'Farrell's (1989) interpretation of Foucault's work takes into account the differences between the contexts in which Foucault's work is understood, using these to illustrate the importance of Foucault's refusal to adhere to the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge. In relation to these differences, criticisms relating to Foucault's happy positivist position illustrate an aporia inherent knowledge. The aporia is that the limits and conditions of possibility for knowledge not only influence the meaning attributed to knowledge but also act as a limit and a condition for the possible ways in which we can understand the meaning of knowledge. This is evidenced by O'Farrell when he highlights that during his archaeological period Foucault was rarely criticised for being a positivist in the English-speaking world, where he was generally regarded as being so theoretical that his regard or

‘facts’ was negligible (ibid, pp.58). Rather, the criticism of positivism was predominately made in France and was directed towards Foucault’s ‘[...] anti-historical, scientism, a love of ‘facts’ divorced from history and humanism.’ (ibid) Thus, in one context Foucault is deemed too theoretical and in another too divorced from theory. Yet in both instances, he is criticised for his apparent deviation from the logic and conventions prevailing within cultural context.

This highlights two factors limiting and conditioning our understanding of Foucault's work. First, a particular way of thinking about what is and what is not methodologically effective will constitute any understanding of Foucault's work. Second and related, this way of thinking is culturally contingent because it is associated with the logic and conventions constituting positive knowledge within the cultural context. As such, it is limited by the conditions influencing the way in which a given context constitutes positive knowledge.

This evidences both the applicability of his claims about self-constitution and why domination can arise when, by relating particular experiences of our self-understanding to the conditions constituting knowledge of our subjectivity, we privilege certain forms of self-understanding. Both become apparent when we consider that in OT Foucault uses the notion of positivism to refer to the modern era, in particular when relating positivity to a knowledge of man that arises from the analytic of finitude.

In OT Foucault uses the phrase analytic of finitude to describe domains of knowledge in which the possibilities for acquiring knowledge lead to the endless quest of designating man as an object (a thing to be known) of nature or history. The endless nature of this quest is created by a perpetual search for empirical knowledge about man, rather than the infinite possibilities for knowing man's nature or the natural world (Foucault, 2002, pp.340-350). As such, whilst we assume that positive, empirical, knowledge of man's nature is infinite it is, for Foucault, limited by the conditions of possibility within particular domains of knowledge.

The limiting nature of these conditions of possibility for knowledge is evident in Allen's (2003) proposition that Foucault undertakes an empirical critique of non-empirical, transcendental reflection on the limits and conditions of possibility for experience. This is limiting because by portraying Foucault in this way Allen ensures he consistently adheres to the conditions of possibility for knowledge within the Western normative tradition. Hence, Allen considers OT only in relation to Foucault's critique of Continental philosophy, as opposed to Anglo-American philosophy, which is a domain of knowledge privileged in the Anglo-American context. This limits Foucault to a critique of a particular domain of knowledge, domains in which non-empirical transcendental reflection is prevalent. Limiting Foucault's critique in this way, Allen interprets his work in accordance with the logic and conventions of Analytic philosophy and these, as Buckle argues (2004) perpetuate the premise that there are rational, empirical standards by which to reason to about our existence (Buckle, 2004).

Yet, as Foucault shows in OT, these standards are part of an historically contingent and particular form of knowledge that, through our self-constitution, exists as a standard by which we know ourselves. We can discern both the importance of this for our understanding of Foucault's work and how this relates to Foucault's happy positivist stance by highlighting Swayer's (2002) consideration of the different interpretations of the term discourse in France and Britain.

Considering Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002a) Swayer argues that by elaborating the term discourse in this text Foucault separates his usage of the term from its use in French structuralism. This gives discourse a distinctive meaning in Foucault's work for two reasons. First, the term has Hegelian connotations because Foucault argues that discourses are historically contingent representations of an externality and a constraint or authority on thought. Second, Foucault relates discourse to positivity, describing positivity as a stage of discourse formation in the modern era (Swayer, 2002, pp.137). The first meaning Swayer (2002) attributes to discourse is important because as an externality discourse can constrain our subjective experiences but can do so only because of the way in which we actively create meaning.

For Foucault, whilst the logic and conventions that comprise the way in which we know are constituted through the learning and skills that enable to us to know our existence, they can also become constitutive of our existence. They can become constitutive because the constraint discourse has on our subjective experiences is one that has an influence on our

subjectivity because it affects the conditions of possibility for the relation between knowledge and our understanding of this knowledge. For example, it affects how we know ourselves as a madman [sic] because the total body of knowledge about madness constrains both the way we are known as an object (a madman [sic]) and the way in which we know ourselves as this object (as a madman [sic]). Thus, discourse affects the relation between how we are known as an object and how we give ourselves meaning as this object and can become a constraint because it can limit the conditions of possibility for this knowledge and our understanding of it. That is, it constrains the conditions constituting the possible ways in which we can be known as mad and the possible ways in which we can know ourselves as mad.

This is crucial because in OT Foucault is theorising that rather than our nature, it is the possibilities for knowing ourselves that are constrained in the modern era. It is with reference to this aspect of Foucault's critique that the relation between constraints on our thought, discourse, and positivity is important. This becomes evident when we consider Foucault's positing the disappearance of discourse when characterising the modern episteme in OT (Foucault, 2002, pp.331). Before the modern era there was a link between the 'I think' and the 'I am', with the transition between the two occurring through the relation between representation and being. Through this link our being was a thing that was represented by the concepts describing our nature when, through our reflection on meaning, the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity were constituted (ibid, pp.339-340).

Whilst this remains true of the modern episteme, in this era we no longer reflect on the limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity and because of this discourse no longer relates how we think to who we are – the ‘I think’ to the ‘I am’. Hence, in the Classical era the ‘I think’ did not lead to the self-evident truth of the ‘I am’ and we interrogated or analysed, rather than assumed, what it is to be a human being. For Foucault, both these features of the Classical era preclude the possibility of a science of man (ibid, pp.353). Thus, it is as a contrast to this era that Foucault portrays the Modern era as one in which there are positive domains of knowledge in which our a priori knowledge of our existence serves as almost self-evident grounds for our thought (ibid, pp.375).

The importance of this to our understanding of Foucault's archaeologies is evident to Canguilhem (1994), who highlights Foucault's challenge to the assumption that the premise for the human sciences can be found in the Classical era. Canguilhem shows that, for Foucault, man could not be treated as a problem in the Classical era because there was no common discourse about representation and things (ibid, pp.85). This common discourse only arose when our ability to know our nature became rooted in a specific history of this nature and only with this did the empirical sciences become specific sciences that supported and contained our nature through their constitution as products of this nature (ibid). In this manner, the modifications occurring in the Classical episteme are crucial to the way in which we understand Foucault's archaeologies because they highlight that we can actively constitute ourselves only when there is are many possible ways of knowing ourselves – many possible discourses.

It is with reference to this that it is important to include in our understanding of Foucault's work the three doubles Allen (2003), rightly, posits as distinctive for Foucault's portrayal of modern man. However, as shown above, we can, contra Allen, include them because each double, including the empirico-transcendental double, is deployed within '[...] the analytic of finitude which lies at the heart of empiricism.' (Foucault, 2001, pp.344) By portraying this analytic and man's relation to it Foucault portrays how, by perpetuating rather than constituting a science of order, the way in which we can know is regulated by the fixed relation between how we know and what we know. Thus, when represented within this analytic our self-understanding is finalised by the privilege given to the empirical meaning of the relation between ourselves and the totality of meaning in the Classical era. Hence, for Foucault,

[...] the field of empirical knowledge's that come into being in the modern era have a perpetual tendency to constitute a metaphysics of life labour and language whilst positing the end of metaphysics. (ibid, pp.345-346)

In this manner, Foucault portrays how Modern empirical knowledge is similar to transcendental thought. The similarity is the assumption that the real is dividable into two different meanings (substances), one of which will possess innate and infallible standards for judging which way of knowing the world is real and thereby rational (Buckle, 2004). This division is between the meaning given by the transcendentalism of a priori knowledge and that given by the empiricism of knowledge, with the latter providing the rational standard by which to know our existence. We can suggest this because, for Foucault, when

we are represented by these ideas we assume that the way in which we come to relate ourselves to ideas – how we know - is separable from what we know of these ideas ourselves. That is, we assume a priori the dissociation between the meaning and the form of our relation to this meaning. Thus, in the Classical era nature and human nature are known in terms of the meaning we gave to our relation to the totality of the episteme and therefore, in relation to other possible ways of knowing ourselves within the episteme. In contrast, in the Modern era, we assume this relation a priori and through these a priori's form of our relation to our experiences by perpetuating rather than constituting a science of order.

When we consider this in relation to the way in which discourse acts as a constraint on our thought we can discern that knowledge, like discourse, can constrain our subjective experiences because of the way in which we actively create meaning. The authority of knowledge is dependent on the privileging of a way of thinking about or understanding ourselves. Hence, Modern knowledge is dependent on the assumption that there is a rational way of thinking about ourselves and a way of relating this thought to our experience of ourselves as rational beings. As such, knowledge acts as a constraint because we privilege a certain way of relating this way of thinking to our knowledge of ourselves (as rational). Thus, in the Modern era, we assume there are rational standards for knowledge about our existence and perpetuate the need for such standards through the logic and conventions that we use to construct them.

It is important to emphasise this because in OT Foucault evidences that rationalism is constituted through the socially constructed nature of our self-understanding. Hence, Foucault posits that the modifications to resemblance and similitude in the Classical era give rise to rationalism as a form of knowledge (Foucault, 2002, pp.59-60). Yet he also makes it apparent that there are many social influences on our self-understanding, positing that humans are not pure intelligences with the ability to create our self-understanding unaided, rather the mind is built in accordance with knowledge; more specifically, in accordance with the conditions constructing theories and thereby delimiting the knowledge that is possible (ibid, pp.66-67). To demonstrate this Foucault, in the body of OT, shows that the modifications to resemblance and similitude in the Classical era occur premise the conditions that influence the way in which we know and theorise ourselves as living, labouring and speaking subjects.

By demonstrating this Foucault develops an account of the changes in the Classical era in a way that shows how, in the Modern era, we assume a priori what we imagined and constituted in the Classical era. That is, he shows how theories about our existence arise from the analytic of imagination and the analysis of nature, both of which are consequential of our dissociating the form and content of knowledge. As such, for Foucault, the separation and privileging of forms of knowledge is possible only when the activity through which create meaning is dissociated from our capacity to understand ourselves. This enables the meanings that our ideas about ourselves to exist as conceptualisations and analyses that are dissociated from the form of our relation to the conceptualisations and analyses themselves.

In this vein, Foucault shows that the analytic of finitude and the authority of empirical knowledge within this analytic, have both arisen because we no longer question either the way in which we imagine the attributes of human nature to be our nature or the relation we constitute between our experience of these attributes and our understanding of these experiences. Hence, in the Classical era how we know ourselves becomes formative of the meaning of things through our relation to the science of order, in which the identity of the things that we know have the power to represent our meaning to us (Foucault, 2002, pp.60-70). In this manner, Foucault makes it apparent that whilst there is no meta-epistemic position from which to reason about our existence we retain our power to constitute ourselves because we retain our ability to constitute knowledge.

Given this, we can argue that whilst Foucault's theorisation of the analytic of finitude portrays how we are constituted by forms of knowledge and their discourses, he also portrays how, through our ability to constitute particular ways of knowing, we constitute ourselves as knowable positively. We can suggest this because Foucault depicts knowledge as having the power to constitute our self-understanding but also presupposes that both knowledge and discourse are constituted by the activities and skills we use to create meaning. In this manner, Foucault creates a theorisation in which knowledge becomes a type of dominance when we finalise the relation between the meaning of our experiences and our understanding of these experiences. Hence, Foucault explains that power relations exist in the mind through our forming a particular relation between our imagination and the form, or meaning, of what we know of ourselves – resemblance (Foucault, 2002, pp.66-67).

Using this argument we can suggest that it is the immanence of power with the activity of knowing that limits and conditions the ways of knowing ourselves in the Classical era and suggest that it is through our power to constitute particular ways of knowing that we constitute ourselves as knowable positively. We can also argue that Foucault portrays discourse or knowledge as a constraint because he is critiquing the assumption that the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjectivity can be separated from the way in which empirical knowledge perpetuates the limits and conditions of possibility for the way in which we can experience and know ourselves.

This is evident to Han (2002), who argues that Foucault critiques the positive knowledge arising from the confusion of the empirical and transcendental within the analytic of finitude because by assuming man and his doubles a priori there is a monopolisation of possible knowledge (ibid). This is the crux of Foucault's account of the subject because without foundation or essence we fix the limits of possibility for the way in which we know by embedding our subjectivity in external conditions. For Han, this suggests that Foucault is concerned, throughout his work, with the power of the a priori to constitute both a basis on which we can know and the limits and conditions for what we can know. For my purposes, it evidences that as opposed to suggesting Foucault theorised that we are wholly constituted by the episteme, we can suggest Foucault's portrayal of resemblance and similitude is a portrayal of how the episteme is constituted by our relation to knowledge. We can also suggest that the episteme becomes increasingly constitutive of this relation when the conditions of possibilities for knowing our nature are identified and finalized by a positive knowledge about man [sic].

These propositions are in accordance with Foucault's refusal of foundations and essences. By construing thought in terms of the possible forms of knowledge Foucault ensures that no knowledge is fundamental and nothing lies beyond our experiences. As such, there is no basis on which to claim a correspondence between a form of subjectivity and the meaning we give to our experiences of the world. Rather, we are constituted because we have constituted the limits of our way of knowing ourselves and the world. This clarifies Foucault's understanding of the subject because since the Classical era we relate to the empiricism of knowledge rather than the meaning of knowledge, constituting the limits and conditions of possibility of our subjectivity through our relation to the logical and rational nature of the positivistic conditions of possibility for forms of knowledge. As such, we can suggest that, through our experiences and our ordering of these experiences, power resides in the activity through which we come to know ourselves in relation to forms of knowledge. Thus, it resides in the activity through which we acquire knowledge.

Further, we can argue that Foucault construes the power of representations as power over because it arises from conditions that limit our freedom to use our learning and skills to search for possible meanings. Thus, as Foucault explains in his appendix to Dreyfus & Rainbow's (1982) text, subjects are formative of power's relation to knowledge because, whilst underpinned by structures of possibility, the subject's power significantly influences both the operation of power and the form that this takes (Foucault, 2000, pp.340-343). That is, whilst possible meanings are structured we retain the ability to use our learning and skills to constitute new structures of possibility for knowledge. Thus, we retain the ability to use our subjective experiences to think beyond the limits and conditions of the episteme

and, as Allen (2003) suggests of Foucault's subject, in thinking beyond them re-constitute our subjective experience.

In this manner, we can argue that when declaring himself to be a happy positivist Foucault is declaring that whilst he is constrained by the conditions of possibility for modern knowledge, he is also having an individual experience of them and using his learning and skills to constitute new structures of possibility for knowledge. This is crucial to our understanding of his project because, using this argument, we can uphold Allen's (2003) suggestion that Foucault's subject takes up the thinking of the episteme and in so doing constitutes itself as a subject. We can uphold this, however, without reading concession or contradiction in his genealogical 'turn' to power. Rather, we can argue that when Foucault portrays the modern episteme in his archaeologies and when he studies it in his genealogies, his focus is demonstrating how ways of knowing can limit and condition our understanding of ourselves by ordering and prescribing the activity through which we can understand our experiences. Thus, we can rethink the premise on which Foucault undertakes his archaeologies and posit an alternative way in which his project is possible.

3.2 THE POSSIBILITIES OF FOUCAULT'S PROJECT – NEITHER INSIDE NOR OUTSIDE THE EPISTEME

The third alternative Allen (2003) forwards as a way in which Foucault's project is possible is that he could be neither wholly inside nor wholly outside the episteme. She also suggests that we can argue this when we allow that the epistemes or regimes depicted by Foucault are more open than his rhetoric suggests and contain within them the resources that will

enable their own critique and transformation (ibid, pp.194). Selecting this alternative Foucault's understanding of self-constitution is viable because we are able to move beyond the assumption that to be effective theory has to assign responsibility and blame for our differential ability to exercise power. We can do this when we recognise that Foucault is critical of positivism because, for Foucault, it is one of the limits and conditions of possibility of modern subjectivity.

Foucault's concern with positivism is integral to the way in which his project is possible because this project and the understanding of the subject therein, arise from his aim of going beyond the prevailing way in which what is considered effective as theory limits and conditions the possibilities for our subjectivity. This, however, is not to suggest that in his archaeologies Foucault assumes he has a method for adopting a meta-epistemic position as Dreyfus & Rainbow (1982) and Allen (2003) argue. Rather, it is to suggest that by historicising and contextualising both the transcendental and empirical conditions of possibility of modern subjectivity Foucault suspends the socially institutionalised and embedded logic and conventions that limit and condition the way in which we know: logic and conventions Foucault understands in terms of the analytic of finitude.

Understood in terms of this aim and Foucault's construal of the affect the analytic of finitude has on our self-constitution, both his archaeology and genealogy are, as Allen (2000, 2003) suggests, an integral part of Foucault's studying the way in which the subjectivity has come to be constituted. We can suggest this because Foucault's development of both these methods enabled him to refer beyond what Bartlett (1992) terms

our referring capacities. For Bartlett whilst neurological capacities, conceptual vocabulary, and the structure of language limit our capacity to conceive of the world and ourselves it is epistemology that defines these limits. This is because these limitations are borne of philosophies use of self-reference to restrict the possible worlds available to us and as such, they are limits that exist in theory but not in practice (ibid).

It is in terms of the theoretical nature of these limitations that Foucault's claiming the perspective of a happy positivist at the beginning of his oeuvre is in accordance with his later genealogical perspective. This is because both archaeology and genealogy aim to re-conceive intellectual enquiry by removing the constraints on possible ways of knowing. Thus, when we include the above interpretation of OT we can suggest that, similarly to his genealogies, Foucault's archaeologies aim to constitute the conditions of possibility for our existence because they are intended to have a practical effect on our way of knowing ourselves (see, Patton, 1995, 1998; O'Farrell, 1989; Rajchman, 1985; Sharpe, 2005; Ashenden & Owen, 1999, Hacking, 1995).¹

The effect is practical because we can argue that Foucault adopts a reflexive strategy. Using Alvesson et al. (2008) classification of reflexive strategies we can discern that Foucault's project coheres around the assumption of an ambiguous, contested social reality, authorial explanations of the project and, crucially, an approach to the modern knowledge in which

¹ Arguments proposing this typically focus on Foucault's later portrayal of the nature of critique. This focus highlights the interrelation between Foucault's claims about of existence and the way in which he makes these claims. In particular, see the debate surrounding the similarities and differences between Foucault and Habermas.

the “[...]subject of reflexivity must ultimately be the social scientific field *in toto*[...]” (ibid, pp.29, citing Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp.40).

Including Foucault's interrogation of the social scientific field *in toto* is crucial because Foucault brackets both the empirical and transcendental limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity. Hence, the limits of the conditions of possibility for subjectivity Foucault theorises are those that have been constituted by two forms of knowledge about subjectivity, the empirical and the transcendental, both of which are constitutive of the domains of knowledge in which the status of science is sought – the human sciences.

Bracketing both these forms of knowledge the contradiction between Foucault's portrayal of the episteme and his claim to normative neutrality is integral to his project because through this Foucault distances his work from both empiricism and transcendentalism. This distancing is possible because, contra Allen (2003) Foucault's critique is not wholly an empirical critique. Rather, we can argue that Foucault's project is effective and his theorisation of the subject viable because, as Smith (2005) suggests, in his archaeologies Foucault aimed to provoke the questioning of taken for granted assumptions and institutions by de-naturalising the way we legitimate our knowledge of the world. To undertake this Foucault, as Smith (2005) argues, Foucault adopted a reflexive approach through which he questioned the premise of disciplinary knowledge, revealing rather than negating both the conditions through which reason is constituted and the particular premises and practices of a discipline (ibid).

In this manner, we can suggest that Foucault is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside the episteme – total body of knowledge – because he adopts a perspective that is outside of particular forms of knowledge within the episteme – empiricism and transcendentalism. Thus, we can argue that he adopts neither an objective nor subjective position; rather he is both inside and outside of the episteme.

We can suggest this because, as shown above, through the circular relation between self-understanding and subjectivity we can form or modify the relation we have to knowledge when we become aware of the different knowledges that are possible; that is, by becoming aware of other ways of knowing our selves and our existence. This forming or modifying the relation between subjects and knowledge can be seen to occur in Foucault's work through his historicization and contextualisation of the positivistic limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity. Undertaking this, Foucault's critique is of the limitations to our knowledge of ourselves that arise from the epistemological premise of modernity and as a critique, it has the practical aim of re-conceiving the meaning of the limits and conditions of possibility for the way in which we refer to ourselves.

The perspective inherent in this aim is evident in Foucault's response to Steiner's (1971) criticisms of OT (Foucault, 1972). Foucault argues that he is approaching things in a way that is altogether different from Steiner's and laughs at Steiner's inclusion of his academic credentials at the end of the article (ibid). This laughter is because Steiner's credentials are evidence of an episteme in which the way we can know is regulated. As such, they represent the constraints that exist on our thought but exist only when we accept, without

question, the rationality premising this authority. Foucault's response, however, evidences that he has the power to act, or in this instance write, in a way that allows him to actively search for meanings and his develop his own explanations about the links between these meanings. Thus, whilst he is embedded within the episteme he is also able to reflect on the nature of this episteme. Hence, Foucault's project is possible because, he is aware that,

[...] we must examine our premises or risk sustaining only one form of knowledge, and one way of life, at the expense of possibly better alternatives. (Smith, 2005, pp.18)

This is crucial to the viability of his account of the subject because Foucault examines forms of knowledge that are privileged and he undertakes this in a way that, through his suppositions about the way we constitute ourselves, leaves the possibilities for alternative knowledge about ourselves open. Hence, Foucault presupposes that all forms of knowledges and subjectivities are both contingent and potential sites of power because knowledge is both constituted by and constitutive of our subjective experiences. Thus, as Allen (2003) suggests, Foucault is aware that the limits and conditions of possibility for our subjectivity are the limits and conditions of possibility of our subjective experience.

Yet he is also aware there is no foundational legitimacy for knowledge, which explains why it is necessary to argue for his adoption of an approach that is neither inside nor outside of the episteme when we are defending his work. When we recognise the absence of foundational legitimacy, we have to concede that there is no epistemological surety for any form of knowledge. Consequentially, the viability of Foucault's understanding of the

subject necessarily arises from both his portrayal of the way in which the modern episteme sets the possibilities for subjectivity and his claim that the episteme sets the conditions of possibility. That is, through his methodology and his theorisation Foucault removes epistemological surety and thereby delimits the limits placed on his ability to create knowledge.

Approached in this way, Foucault's project is possible because he challenges the adherence to particular forms of knowledge in which there are specific, authoritative, conventions for reflecting on the world. As such, contra Allen (2003), Foucault's knowledge is not intelligible because he adheres to the prevailing way in which we think about knowledge. Rather, it is intelligible because he challenges this way thinking.

CONCLUSION

By considering the beginning of OT, we can discern a relation between Foucault's understanding of the subject and the premise from which he began. Whilst the particulars differ, the inclusion of this premise evidences the general conclusions reached about the way in which he undertakes his work and the way in which he understands the subject. The relation between these stems from criticisms of work that are directed at Foucault's refusal to adhere to the limits and conditions of possibility of knowledge. Thus, we can argue that these criticisms stem from an adherence to the logic and conventions particular to a form of knowledge and the rationality upon which this knowledge is premised.

This sums the central problem when defending Foucault's work. The problem is that a predominate amount of criticisms surrounding his project are valid. However, they are valid because criticism is directed at Foucault's failure to adhere to a framework of reasoning in which to be valid is to forward an effective, viable, theory in which a normative, evaluative means for understanding our existence is supplied. Given this, the issue we face when interpreting Foucault's theorisations or conceptualisations is the problem of understanding Foucault's meaning when our understanding of his knowledge must adhere to the prevailing limits and conditions of possibility for subjectivity. This problem, in part, explains why there is a relative dearth of material defending his meaning because to defend it we rely on a desire to go beyond these limits and conditions ourselves.

This personal nature of our understanding of Foucault's work explains why when interpreting Foucault's work we are faced with a polarisation of debates. It does so because when we approach Foucault's work we are faced with two choices, to remain within the established knowledge prevailing in the external context or to situate ourselves within the internal context of Foucault's work and familiarize ourselves with the knowledge that he sought to create. It is this familiarity that those favourable to Foucault's work achieve and this that alters the basis on which we can understand his work.

With this, defences of Foucault's work, including my own, accept the idiosyncratic nature of his theories; for example, his self-revisions, changing focuses, and slippages. We do so because we are questioning the relation between our subjectivity and modern knowledge and as such, can interpret Foucault in accordance with our own desire to forward knowledge that goes beyond the epistemology and methodology of prevailing knowledge. Hence, Feminism is noticeable for its utilisation of Foucault's theories and concepts (see, for example, Butler, 2002).

When adopting this approach, however, problems arise if we hope to achieve an alternative subjectivity because without a normative premise on which to ground this subjectivity we are unable to constitute our self-understanding and thereby, unable to constitute our social and political circumstances in accordance with this subjectivity.¹ Thus, whilst we can challenge the basis on which we can judge the viability of Foucault's theories and concepts this understanding is limited unless it is accompanied by epistemic changes, without these

¹ See Allen (1998), cited here, for this criticism of Feminist's usage of Foucault's work.

changes the conditions determining viability continue to affect the way in which we know his work.

There are two ways of remedying this, the first, predominate way, and the one adopted by Allen (2000, 2003), is to situate Foucault within existing critical traditions. Situated here we assume the legitimacy of a particular relation between knowledge of subjectivity and our subjectivity, a relation in which, through formulations of how to know, the way in which we know the world becomes a limit and condition of possibility of our subjectivity. Second and the way adopted by my understanding of Foucault's subject is to endorse the option of Foucault being neither wholly inside nor outside the episteme and accept that the results of his critique will '[...]of necessity be local, historically and culturally specific, and pragmatic rather than universal and ahistorical.' (Allen, 2003, pp.194) In this instance, the results are localised to the human sciences and the knowledge forwarded by a particular academic context at a particular time in history.

In regards to the possible effectiveness of this understanding of Foucault's work, it is pertinent that Nancy Fraser influences the suggestion that Foucault could be neither inside nor outside the episteme. It is pertinent because, like many of those criticising Foucault's work, Fraser (1981) criticises his lack of a normative criteria for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable forms of power. Yet, by influencing this alternative option, Fraser evidences that we need not concede to the imperative of conceiving the viability of Foucault's work in terms of the extent to which he adheres to the particular standard for effective theory that has been assumed by particular domains of knowledge. That is, we can

viably construe effectiveness in a way that goes beyond assigning responsibility and blame for our differential ability to exercise power.

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